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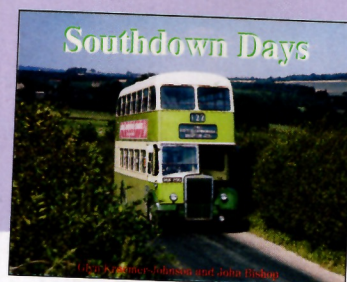
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Find out what you may have missed this year

DRINK BAN MAY NOT HAVE WORKED, BUT INDUSTRY SHOULD TEST GOVERNMENT'S RESOLVE

The government's two-day flirtation with a ban on alcohol consumption on buses and trains was a flash of recognition of one of the obstacles to persuading the motoring public to make more use of public transport — the perception that we might have to share our travelling space with obnoxious, aggressive, inebriated troublemakers.

This is more than a mere perception in many places — and indeed it is a far from new phenomenon — but the alcohol ban was a blunt sledgehammer that wouldn't crack the nut in question.

The idea was killed off by some obvious impracticalities. If it applied only in England, how would cross-border trains organise their catering? And would anti-social behaviour be curbed by depriving civilised commuters of a quiet G&T on the 18.06 from Paddington?

More to the point, while it is hard to see why alcohol consumption need ever be tolerated on local buses, would this ban have the slightest impact on behaviour *before* the rowdier elements make their way home? Surely that is when the chemicals take effect and determine how they will behave as passengers.

And if taxi drivers are understandably reluctant to take the more dramatically intoxicated and belligerent late night revellers home, those revellers will beat an inevitable path to the nearest bus stop. All of which is bad news for already stressed bus drivers.

Even if a ban does make it to the statute book, how and by whom might it be enforced? By potentially intimidated drivers or fellow passengers? By step-on supervisory staff? By already over-stretched police officers? Or with closed circuit television? The difficulty of enforcing fare payment (notably on London bendibuses), smoking and eating bans suggests that — when it really matters — this could be a nigh-on-hopeless task.

At least the railways can call upon the British Transport Police, but short of adding further to their costs by hiring private security staff — bouncers on the buses — it is difficult to see how operators could make it work.

Yet we shouldn't dismiss this out of hand. Anti-social behaviour — or the fear of sharing our personal space with people we would choose to avoid in most circumstances — does keep many people in their cars. And it would be hypocritical to suggest that they should tolerate it for the greater good of the environment or traffic flow.

But its solution — if indeed it can be solved in an open society — will only come, and probably very gradually, by tackling the wider problem and not simply by saying you can drink to and beyond your liver's content but you daren't down a drop of Dubonnet on a Dennis Dart.

We should also cling to the hope that, in floating the idea of a ban, the government wants to make public transport more pleasant for everyone and that it wasn't simply indulging in an off-the-top-of-the-head quick fix to deflect criticism from its support for all-night drinking.

It may be naïve to believe that this could be the case, but bus operators — and other public transport operators and authorities — should take it as a signal that the government does want a higher quality and more civilised transport system. And they should demonstrate to the decision makers how they could deliver such an improvement, while also making crystal clear to Whitehall what its side of the bargain should be.



ALAN MILLAR

Cover picture: Freshly repainted Arriva London South L59, one of the final batch of 260 ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians ordered by London Buses, in October 1999. GEOFF RIXON



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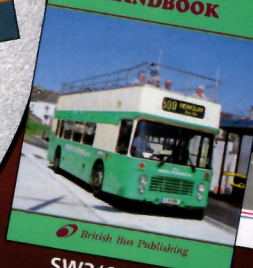
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HUDDERSFIELD RE-REGULATION TRIAL ON THE CARDS AS SOUTH YORKS LAUNCHES SALVO AGAINST FIRST

The government appears to be looking seriously at introducing a bus service franchising trial outside London — at the same time as one of the passenger transport executives has launched a scathing attack on First's services in its area.

Speaking at a fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference in October, Treasury minister John Healey revealed plans for trials in an unspecified number of areas, which would give PTEs a bigger say over how bus companies operate in their territories. He says London's success in boosting bus travel means the government has 'started to look at what we could trial, and we have at least one area in mind'.

Afterwards, he said the government is asking individual PTEs to make the case for powers to control timetables and routes. 'It's early days. What we have done already is change the terms of the quality contract, and there is a recognition that buses are absolutely an essential form of transport for many people who do not have the wherewithal to own their own car.'

One area mooted for a trial is Huddersfield, where Metro (the West Yorkshire PTE) is thought to be considering franchising around five groups of routes. Metro already effectively franchises its Mybus yellow schoolbus routes.

Several operators, including First West Yorkshire, Yorkshire Traction, Arriva and various independents serve the town. On-street competition has increased recently, with two of the independents — Paul's Travel and K-Line — registering a joint service 314A between Bradley, Huddersfield and Holmfirth. Paul's provides three buses, K-Line the

balance, with tickets valid on either operator's service. First — which has been criticised for frequent route and timetable changes and fares increases — is running extra journeys to New Mill, to protect its market share along the new route.

Talk of a Huddersfield trial comes as politicians and a trade union in South Yorkshire have launched a co-ordinated verbal attack on First, which announced its fourth fares increase in a year. Members of South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority passed a unanimous vote of no confidence in First, which says that its 19 November fares increase is needed to pay for rising costs — including fuel and the after-effects of last summer's three-week drivers' strike.

Sheffield City Council leader Jan Wilson told First South Yorkshire managing director Gary Nolan: 'The buses in South Yorkshire appear to be in a permanent state of turmoil. Customers feel as if there is change all the time. Fares are going through the roof and services are messed about. You are just managing decline and protecting your profits. The degree of public service is nil.'

Once again, *Buses* will publish its eagerly sought-after Rally Calendar & Museum Guide in our March and April issues.

Each 16-page guide will be published free inside the magazine, complete with photographs and details of where and when rallies, running days, swapmeets and enthusiast fairs

are being held throughout the British Isles. Part 1 in March *Buses* will list events taking place up to 30 June. Part 2 in April *Buses* will cover the rest of the year.

If you are planning any of these events for 2006, don't miss the opportunity to have it promoted free of charge.

Please send the details to the Editor at:

Buses Rally Calendar,
PO Box 3759, Glasgow,
G41 5YN, fax 0141 427 9594
or e-mail

buseseditor@btconnect.com

to arrive no later than
Friday 13 January for Part 1
or **Friday 28 January** for Part 2.



Above and left: Competition in Huddersfield with a Paul's Travel BMC Falcon, First West Yorkshire Volvo Olympian and a Yorkshire Traction East Lincs single-decker all vying for business. Paul's Travel and K-Line are offering inter-available cut-price day returns.
DANIEL STAZICKER

2006

RALLY

CALENDARS

GOVT PROVIDES £20 MILLION FOR 43 MORE KICK-START SCHEMES

Transport minister Karen Buck has announced the 43 winners of the second round of Kick-Start grants for enhanced and new routes across England. The government believes all have the potential to become viable within three years.

'The winning schemes demonstrate how local authorities can work with bus operators to develop viable schemes that are well integrated into existing public transport,' she says. 'They will also contribute to wider objectives like social inclusion and future local development.' The projects were selected from 117 put forward by 60 local authorities and passenger transport executives and follow last year's first round of 18 Kick-Start projects granted £8 million of government funds.

Four of the six PTEs — Greater Manchester, Tyne & Wear, South and West Yorkshire — share £3.33 million of the £19.85 million made available for route development, but the largest single award goes to Cambridgeshire. The county council and Stagecoach — which pioneered the Kick-Start concept in New Zealand and then on a service in its Scottish home city of Perth — share £2.49 million for the first phase of what the county calls the Cambridge Sustainable Transport 2020 Vision. This is a long-term project that will include improved bus routes, infrastructure and traffic management measures.

Nexus, the Tyne & Wear PTE, gets the second largest slice of funds — £1.42 million — for three separate projects. Over £518,000 will increase the frequency of cross-Wear services 135/136 in inner city Sunderland, over £336,000 will

double the frequency of the Gateshead Orbital service, while £565,000 is being provided for new service X47 between central Newcastle and Kingston Park.

Greater Manchester PTE gets £1.09 million for three projects — £446,000 for an enhanced daytime service and new evening and Sunday journeys on service 263 (Manchester-Altrincham), nearly £286,000 for new all-day service X34 between Manchester and Leigh, and £358,000 to improve route 378 between Bramhall and Stockport.

Devon and Lincolnshire have each secured £1.04 million for two schemes. Devon gets £750,000 for a major upgrade of Stagecoach services A, B, E, F and P in Exeter, plus £293,000 for Tavy Goldline, a similar enhancement between Tavistock, Yelverton, Derriford Hospital and Plymouth.

Lincolnshire's funding will extend its already successful InterConnect and InterTown concepts to Gainsborough. £713,000 will provide an InterConnect package of trunk and connecting feeder services

Right: Regal Busways, which is to operate the new Canvey Island route in Essex, has also become the first customer for the MCV Evolution-bodied Alexander Dennis Dart. AE55 EHM carries a Dennis badge on the front, echoing the chassis manufacturer's recent decision not to use the Alexander name on its coach products.

LEE WHITEHEAD

on the corridors to Lincoln and Scunthorpe, while £419,000 will enhance the town network.

Cheshire gets the largest grant for a single route — £998,000 to increase frequencies and provide better bus stops and shelters along the Northwich-Winsford-Leighton Hospital-Crewe corridor.

Among the other grants are £802,000 to Lancashire for Chorley Connect, a nine-route network of low-floor bus services across the town. Essex gets over £793,000 for two new routes — £548,000 for a direct, branded link that Regal Busways will operate between Canvey Island, Benfleet station and Chelmsford from next spring, and £245,000 for an hourly link between economically deprived Jaywick and Clacton.

£721,000 goes to Stockton-on-Tees for MiBus, a high-quality half-hourly service along the new South Stockton Link Road, connecting

Stockton and Ingleby Barwick with Middlesbrough and the James Cook University Hospital. Arriva North East will operate MiBus, using four Alexander Dennis Enviro300s equipped with leather seats and other features designed to attract car drivers. It will be supported by the region's first real-time information system and all stops will have level boarding platforms.

Warwickshire receives £445,000 for new route 767 connecting Tamworth and Birmingham Airport via Coleshill, while Leicestershire receives £701,000 to improve Arriva and Kinchbus routes to Nottingham East Midlands Airport. South Yorkshire PTE's £465,000 will increase frequency of Yorkshire Traction services 21/22 (Barnsley-Penistone and beyond) from half-hourly to every 20min, while Metro (West Yorkshire PTE) gets £361,000 for services in Bradford and Huddersfield.



KENT FASTRACK STARTS FEBRUARY AS FIRST PUSHES FOR SWANSEA 'FTR'



The first phase of Fastrack, the largely segregated bus system for the Thames Gateway communities of north Kent, is due to start operating in February. Kent County Council has ordered 15 air-conditioned buses — drawings show Wright-bodied Volvo single-deckers — for the first services connecting Dartford, Bluewater shopping centre, Greenhithe and Gravesend. Fastrack will eventually link new and existing communities in

the area with one another and with the new international and domestic Channel Tunnel Rail Link services soon to be operated from Ebbsfleet station. Over half of the routes will run on bus-only roads, a further 25% on bus lanes on existing roads.

Meanwhile, First Cymru and Swansea Council have stepped up their campaign for Swansea Metro, an 'ftr' project using tram-like Wright StreetCar buses and dedicated infrastructure to provide a high quality north-south connection between Morriston and Mumbles through the city centre and its proposed new Quadrant Transport Interchange. The council is bidding for Welsh Assembly funding for the project.

FRENCH GIANT RETURNS TO UK WITH BEBB BUY

Veolia Transport — the new name of the French transport giant best remembered as Connex — has returned to the UK public transport market by acquiring Bebb Travel, one of the best respected independents in South Wales.

Llantwit Fardre-based Bebb has been in business for 80 years. It currently operates 39 vehicles — 17 Volvo coaches (B12Ms and

B12Bs with Jonckheere and Plaxton bodies) on National Express routes connecting South Wales and south-west England with London, Yorkshire and Scotland, and 22 Optare Solos on local bus routes in Cardiff and Pontypridd.

Bebb director David Newman stays on as managing director, but chairman Nigel Bebb is succeeded

by Veolia Transport's UK managing director, John O'Brien, who was franchising director at the Office of Rail Franchising before joining Connex two years ago.

He says Veolia is interested in acquiring other quality operators like Bebb. Connex won and lost two rail franchises (South Central and South Eastern) and entered

the London bus market in February 2000, when its Connex Bus subsidiary began running tendered route 3. Despite expanding through further tender gains and by acquiring the former Limebourne operations, the business lost money and Connex sold out to National Express in February last year.

Below: Optare Solo CE52 UWZ on a Bebb's park-&-ride contract in Cardiff. **MARK BAILEY**



Below: Plaxton Panther-bodied Volvo B12B CN05 DZG preparing to leave Cardiff for London in March on National Express service 509. **BARRIE GILBERT**



TRANSDEV GETS GREEN LIGHT FOR BOURNEMOUTH TAKEOVER

The long and troubled privatisation saga at Bournemouth Yellow Buses appeared close to resolution in early November, with news that transport secretary Alistair Darling has approved the sale of the council-owned company to French transport group Transdev.

The deal was held up when Bournemouth Council was found to

have discriminated against local operator Excelsior Coaches by excluding it from its final round of bidding, but the Department for Transport has concluded that the process was conducted in a fair and proper manner.

Yellow Buses managing director John Ashmore — a former MD at Connex Bus in London — says

Transdev has a 'very, very good reputation throughout the country where it does operate and I don't see any problem in Bournemouth with it operating here'.

And James Wall, branch secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union, says: 'If it had to be sold, Transdev, of the five bidders, offered the best assurances

for pensions and job security.'

Meanwhile, local press reports suggest that Yellow Buses' troubles may not be over. Wilts & Dorset — the council rejected its bid to acquire Yellow Buses and merge their services into a single network — is to use Excelsior's premises as an base for up to 30 buses on expanded services in Bournemouth.

DUNN-LINE STRIKES £2 MILLION ALPHA DEAL

Dunn-Line — the Nottingham-based, Alternative Investment Market-listed mini group — has agreed a £2 million deal to expand into Humberside by acquiring the Alpha Coach Company.

It has applied for a 55-vehicle operator licence to cover Hull-based Alpha's activities in the North Eastern Traffic Area and for a separate 15-vehicle North Western O-licence for its contracts associated with BAE Systems in Lancashire and Cheshire.

Right: Five Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs were delivered for BAE Systems work in Lancashire, but now work mainly on a Hull park-&-ride.



OPTARE DOUBLE-DECKER IS BACK ON THE STOCKS

Optare has reactivated its much delayed project to build a side-engined 100% low-floor double-decker and says a prototype may be ready in time for the Euro Bus Expo show in Birmingham next November.

The Leeds-based manufacturer first revealed plans to develop an integral double-decker in 2000, when it was taken over by the Hungarian NABI company. But NABI's more recent financial problems led to the

project being shelved. However, managing director Bob Coombes says this year's management buyout means that Optare is again ready to move ahead with the project.

He says that the company is poised to build the first chassis and is close to signing off a body design. A test programme can begin as soon as the prototype is complete and a suitable Euro4 engine is available, and although production is unlikely to

begin before 2007, the vehicle could well be launched at the National Exhibition Centre on 7 November next year.

While the double-deck market has become more crowded, with Alexander Dennis, Volvo, Scania, VDL and soon MAN competing for chassis business, and Wrightbus and East Lincs vying with Alexander Dennis and Scania for body orders, he is confident that there is room for an innovative Optare product.

Acknowledging that Alexander Dennis has set a new benchmark with the improved lower deck seating capacity of the Enviro400, he says: 'Our double-decker cannot be a "me too" product. We want to make design innovations and move the game on. In a 1,000-vehicle market, we should be

taking at least 10% in the fullness of time.'

Before NABI suspended the project, Optare planned to use the same Mercedes-Benz 906 engine and ZF automatic transmission in the double-decker as in the initial standard specification of its Tempo single-decker. That may change, as operator choice is leading more customers to specify the Allison transmission option in the Tempo and Optare is likely also to offer an exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) MAN engine in the Tempo for operators reluctant to go for the Mercedes engine, which requires AdBlue fuel additive to comply with Euro4 emission levels.

Optare exhibited a right-hand-drive Tempo for Arriva Cymru and two left-hand-drive Solos at the Busworld exhibition at Kortrijk, Belgium in October. It is developing a left-hand-drive Euro4 Tempo, which should also be launched next autumn as part of the company's drive to expand in Denmark and the Benelux countries.



Left: A computer generated image of a left-hand-drive Tempo, which Optare hopes to launch shortly before its long awaited double-decker.

ARRIVA REVEALS ITS WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE GREEN LINE COACH



The first of five Van Hool Alicron-bodied VDL SB4000+ coaches for Arriva the Shires & Essex was launched outside the Busworld show in Kortrijk.

Unlike the Plaxton and Caetano-bodied coaches for First, Stagecoach and National Express,

these vehicles — for the Green Line service between central London and Luton Airport — have separate, parallel entrances for walking and wheelchair-using passengers.

The longer — 3.5m — front overhang leaves space on the 12.4m coach for a second door with

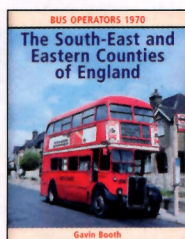
retractable wheelchair lift, an arrangement that eliminates the risk of the lift being damaged by speed humps or on steep short gradients. There are 55 seats, eight of them on a lower floor ahead of the front



axle, and the four nearside seats fold away when a wheelchair is carried.

■ Busworld show report, p26

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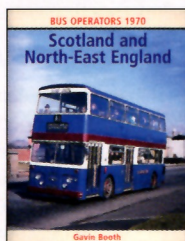


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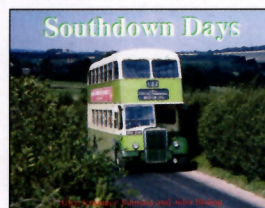


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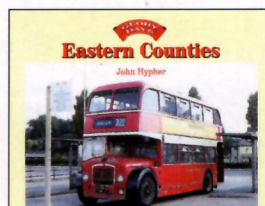
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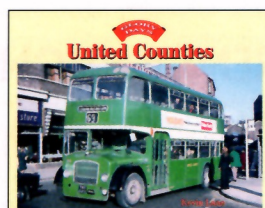
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Eastern Counties dominated the provision of public transport in much of East Anglia from its formation in 1931. The book includes an excellent selection of both colour and mono images recalling the great variety of vehicles operated over the years, from Peterborough's electric trams to the Leyland National of the 1970s.

ISBN: 0 7110 3069 3 | HB | 184mm x 240mm
96pp | c100 mono & colour photographs | **£16.99**



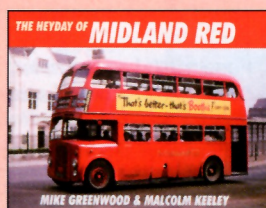
Glory Days: United Counties

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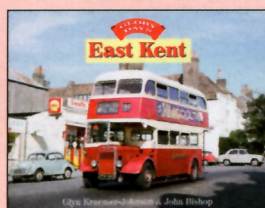
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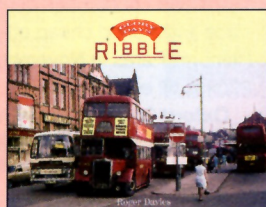
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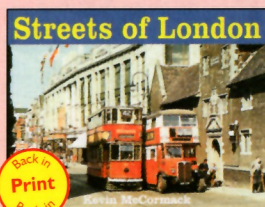
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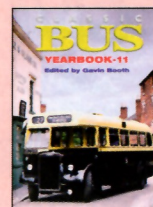
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MORLEY'S NO MORE AS HEAD TAKES OVER ROUTES

Another old established pre-deregulation independent has disappeared with the demise of J. R. Morley & Sons, which ran a half-hourly service into Peterborough from its home village of nearby Whittlesey. Another independent has taken over.

Morley's had run the seven-mile route for 83 years, operating it exclusively after National Bus

Company-owned Cambus deregistered its parallel service in 1986. Its 14-vehicle fleet included seven ex-London Transport double-deckers — five Leyland Titans and two Fleetlines.

Morley's blames the recent massive increases in fuel prices and insurance premiums for the decision to close down and sell its three sites to property developers. Alec Head,



Above: One of Morley's two MCW-bodied ex-London Leyland Fleetlines, OJD 192R, in Peterborough in 1992

Left: Alec Head has continued the ex-London double-deck tradition, with MCW Metrobus KYV 636X branded for the ex-Morley's service. **K. MacLEOD**

based over the Cambridgeshire boundary in Lutton, Northamptonshire, took over the routes, staff and some vehicles from 31 October, using

double-deckers branded from the outset for the 701 service between Peterborough, Whittlesey, Coates and Turves.

STAGECOACH AND TRENT BARTON TEAM UP PRONTO

Stagecoach East Midland and Trent Barton have dropped any remaining vestiges of competition on the Nottingham-Mansfield-Chesterfield corridor, replacing their 737 and 747 services with a combined service branded as Pronto.

Both operators' buses are being given a common livery of purple and pink, with joint ticketing and the same number of departures as before. 'This is an excellent example of bus companies working together for the

benefit of our customers,' says Melvyn Hopwood at Trent Barton.

This development comes as the Office of Fair Trading has also eased restrictions on joint ticketing. It says that multi-operator tickets benefit

passengers and should be exempted from the Competition Act at least until 2011. It also says that operators should no longer be compelled to sell their own travel cards as well as multi-operator passes.



Right: Stagecoach East Midland 33760 (R460 LSO), an Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF, in Pronto colours but devoid of vinyls to promote the combined service. **BEN MORROLL**

PLAXTON GIVES BEAVER A NEW LOOK

Plaxton's seemingly endless output of new products has brought a dramatically restyled version of its Beaver midibus, built on the Mercedes-Benz Vario.

Designed primarily for the social services market, this new variant incorporates the front end styling of the Cheetah midicoach and a single-leaf coach door. The first example, for Doncaster

Community Transport, is a 32-seater with tail lift and double doors in the back. Structurally, it remains the same as the existing Beaver, but Plaxton believes that coach styling will cater for the changing demands of the social services market. 'Community transport operators are steadily raising standards,' says sales director Kevin Wood



IN BRIEF

Aberdeen City Council has approved controversial plans for a £10 million global headquarters and bus depot for FirstGroup in the city's green belt. First threatened to site the headquarters in Yorkshire if the plan was turned down. Residents object to the bus depot and want the Scottish Executive to reverse the council's decision.

Stagecoach is extending its Megabus low fares concept to its rail operations, by launching a web-booked Megatrain service on South West Trains' Portsmouth-London and Southampton-London services from 14 November.

First says passenger growth on its 701 and 702 Green Line routes between Thames Valley towns and London has doubled since it launched cheap off-peak Rainbow Fares in November 2004 to fill empty seats.

Oxford Bus Company has fitted closed circuit television in all of its 160-vehicle fleet.

New bus and coach registrations over the first 10 months of this year are up 2.9% on 2004, at 3,499 vehicles. Volvo is clear market leader with its share up from 27.2% to 31.8%. Second-placed Alexander Dennis is down from 23.8% to 16.9%.

DERBY BUS STATION FINALLY CLOSES

Derby's art deco bus station finally closed on 22 October — 72 years after it opened — and is being demolished to make way for a new commercial centre incorporating a smaller bus station with enclosed passenger waiting area and saw tooth bus bays.

The new facility opens in 2007, with services meantime terminating at a series of bus shelters in five surrounding streets. Collectively, these are advertised as a 'temporary bus station', but *Buses* correspondent Richard Lomas is not impressed.

'The problem is that no measures have been taken to reduce the private car traffic on some of these streets,' he says. 'The bus station offices have been replaced by a shantytown of temporary buildings for the crews, but there is no waiting room, no enquiry office and nowhere to get a timetable. The advice I received was to ask the driver on the bus.'

Right: Arriva Midlands buses and waiting passengers in Derby bus station in May this year.



TM PUTS FIRST PRIMO ON THE ROAD

Chesterfield-based TM Travel placed the first of its two Plaxton Primo midibuses in service in early November. Although a demonstrator had already seen service with First

Essex, this bus — which Plaxton exhibited at Coach & Bus Live in October — is almost certainly the first Primo to join a customer's fleet.

Picture by C. A. SELLERS



Right: Thurrock, Essex-based Town & Country has refurbished this former Eastern National ECW-bodied Bristol KSW5G open-topper for special events and private hires. Now numbered KSW480, WNO 480 was Eastern National 2384 and dates from 1953. It now has upper deck seats for a 2.5m-wide double-decker.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE



MODEL WINNERS OF RENOWN

The six winners of the new Exclusive First Editions 1/76th-scale AEC Renown models in our October competition are Martin Barnett of Christchurch, Nigel Brannan of Stockton on the Forest, B. R. Ilbrey of Ivybridge, John Milnes of Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Peter Mudel of Davyhulme and Lance Roberts of Eastbourne. EFE will mail your prizes direct.

Congratulations all round and to all of you who knew that the correct answers were that the Renown replaced the AEC Bridgemaster, North Western Road Car (in whose livery the models are painted) had its head office in Stockport and Crosville classed its Renowns as DAA (for Double-deck AEC [chassis] AEC [engine]).

ARE YOU DAVID PEARSON?

Would David Pearson of Walsall, one of the winners of our Corgi Original Omnibus Company Van Hool model coach competition in August *Buses*, please contact us

with your current address details? Corgi has tried to deliver your prize but has been unable to locate you at the address you supplied.

IN BUSES NEXT MONTH On sale 16 December

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Picture by KEITH RAPLEY

Owing to events beyond our control, we are unable to include the feature on London after the Routemaster in this month's *BUSES*. We hope to be able to publish it next month

ENSIGN PLANS CROSS-THAMES RUNNING DAYS

A selection of preserved London buses will operate on cross-river Ensignbus service X80 and Blue Triangle 372 on 10 and 17 December.

Ensign, which hopes this will become an annual event, will operate additional X80 trips hourly from 11.15 to 17.15 from Lakeside

shopping centre and between 12.00 and 17.00 from Gravesend station. Buses — including Routemasters, RTs and recently repatriated lowbridge RLH61 — will not serve Swanscombe village (owing to speed humps) or Valley Drive.

Blue Triangle plans to run some specials on the 372. These are due

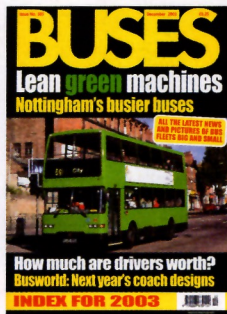
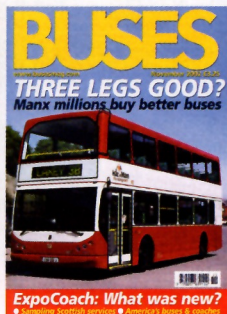
to arrive at Lakeside on the hour, so should meet up with departing X80s. It also is possible that a Blue Triangle vehicle will work an X80 and an Ensign a 372.

Ensign's Ross Newman says that, subject to Transport for London approval, it is also hoped that towards the end of the day,

RLH61 will run dead to Cranham and perform one round trip on a 248 — a "real" RLH route.

Standard X80 fares will apply (no passes of any kind are valid), but a special £5 all-day enthusiast fare will be available and TfL passes will be valid on the 372 and 248.

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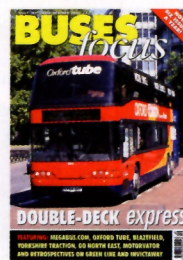
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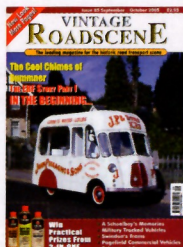
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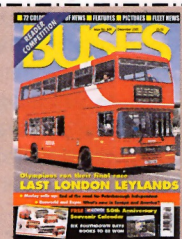
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CLIVE HODGSON TO SUCCEED DAVID QUANTON IN KEY ALEXANDER DENNIS SALES ROLE



Clive Hodgson

who is retiring, also is an ex-Leyland man who, at one time, was plant director of the Leyland National factory in Workington. After leaving Leyland, he became managing director of Plaxton-owned Reeve Burgess, becoming sales and marketing director for Plaxton and taking up his current post on the formation of TransBus International in 2000. He retired after TransBus collapsed in March 2004, but returned when Alexander Dennis took over the chassis and bus bodybuilding business two months later.

EvoBus UK's general manager sales, **Clive Hodgson**, is to succeed **David Quainton** as sales director with Alexander Dennis. He began his career with Leyland Bus, then was with Plaxton and Alexander before joining EvoBus in 2002, since when he has overseen the bulk of Mercedes-Benz Citaro sales in the UK.

David Quainton,



David Quainton

JOHN GILBERT BECOMES EUROLINES VICE-PRES

Eurolines UK managing director **John Gilbert** has become vice-president of the pan-European organisation, a federation of 32 international service operators serving over 700 destinations.

He has been at the international section of National Express since 1984, beginning as manager of the Eurolines Travel Division.

ARRIVA SEEKS GRADUATES FOR UK AND EUROPE

Arriva has begun a pan-European drive to encourage graduates to embark on careers in the public transport industry, with recruitment efforts focused on the UK, Italy, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. Graduates can choose to join a general management or engineering management programme. It says each of these provides a thorough development programme to equip new graduates with commercial and technical skills as well as valuable operational experience. **David Martin**, Arriva's group managing director – operations, says: 'The graduates we recruit will become Arriva's future leaders. We're looking for top-level candidates who want to work in a changing, challenging environment and for a business that will recognise and reward their commitment and achievements.'



SITE MANAGER NAMED FOR CARDIFF BUS

Cardiff Bus has appointed **Vincent Cavanagh** to the new role of site manager, responsible for all aspects of the company's premises maintenance and security. He was

previously health and safety manager at Cotton Traders, responsible for 43 shops, three head-office/warehouse sites and 500 employees.

PETER JAMES LEAVES FOOTMAN JAMES

Peter James, executive chairman and founder of classic vehicle insurance broker Footman James, is leaving to concentrate on his other business interests.

MAC COOPER, DRIVING FORCE AT ASTON MANOR MUSEUM

Former Aston Manor Road Transport Museum chairman **Mac Cooper** died on 29 October aged 70. Mac (short for Malcolm) had been suffering from Parkinson's Disease and this alone had forced him to give up his interest in running the museum early in 2003.

His interest in buses centred initially on the products of Midland Red's Carlyle Works in Birmingham, but his main involvement in the preservation movement was through his love of all things Bournemouth. He owned full-front Leyland PD2 KEL 131, sold a few months ago to Stephen Morris of Quantock Motor Services, and also Tiger Cub RRU 903, which underwent significant restoration work in more recent years. The Tiger Cub remains at on display at the museum, which opened in 1992.

He was one of the earlier members of West Midlands Vintage Vehicle Society and became vice-chairman and organiser in chief of the Outer Circle Rally from the early 1980s. That led to the creation of the Aston Manor museum. He is survived by his wife Pat, a constant support and the face visitors usually saw in the museum shop.



NEW CHAIRMAN FOR FOKAB

After seven years, **Brian Goldsmith** has stood down as chairman of Friends of King Alfred Buses, making way for fellow member **Peter Murnaghan** to occupy the hot seat at the Winchester-based charity.

FoKAB was formed in 1985 by local enthusiast **James Freeman** (now managing director at Stagecoach East) to rescue and restore buses from the former King Alfred Motor Services fleet. Under Brian Goldsmith's chairmanship, the group made a long-awaited start on the rebuilding of 55-year-old Leyland Olympic single-decker JAA 708. He also masterminded the group's conversion to a registered charity and found suitable premises in which to restore and keep the 14 vehicles.



'I never intended to stay in the chair for seven years and I now want to hand over the responsibilities to a younger member,' he says, but he is remaining actively involved as FoKAB's engineering and maintenance co-ordinator.

Peter Murnaghan says preparations are well advanced for the next annual FoKAB New Year's Day running day in Winchester on 1 January when a network of free bus services will again re-create the 1950s and 1960s when Winchester was served by green buses.

Left: Brian Goldsmith greets Peter Murnaghan (wearing the tie) in front of Leyland Tiger Cub WCG 104, FoKAB's first bus to be saved, in Winchester Broadway.

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IS STAGECOACH PLANNING A KIWI FLIGHT?

Stagecoach has stopped short of denying rumours that it wants to sell its bus and ferry businesses in New Zealand.

According to a *Sunday Times* report on 30 October, analysts believe the UK group could sell the New Zealand operations, centred on the cities of Wellington and Auckland, for around £100 million. Together, they operate

around 1,000 buses (including the Wellington trolleybus system) and the Fullers Ferries subsidiary has nine vessels in Auckland.

Although still profitable, margins in these businesses have fallen and Stagecoach has lost routes to competitors in recent tendering rounds. It also lost out to French-owned Connex in the privatisation of rail services in Auckland.

The newspaper report picked up on rumours circulating in New Zealand that Stagecoach is seeking a buyer as part of a plan to concentrate on its UK and North American transport businesses. It has been in New Zealand since buying Wellington City Transport 13 years ago, but in that time it has sold two businesses in Hong Kong, has been in and out of Portugal and Scandinavia, has quit Africa and reduced its North American operations.

Contacted by *Buses* before the *Sunday Times* report appeared, Stagecoach simply denied a specific

rumour that it was in discussion with a Hong Kong-based consortium and has since refuted reports that it is in discussion with Singapore-based ComfortDelGro. On New Zealand National Radio, the Singapore group said: 'It is not company policy to comment on possible purchase rumours.'

Significantly, on the day after the *Sunday Times* report appeared, *The Herald* newspaper in Scotland reported that when it asked Stagecoach's spokesman if the 'for sale' reports were inaccurate, he said: 'I'm not prepared to say.'

Below: A now three-year-old Coachwork International-bodied MAN 12.223 of Stagecoach Auckland in a special livery for the City Circuit service. MARK LYONS



Right: Among the vehicles taken over with the Wellington City Transport business was this Emslie-bodied Hino BG300 coach. STAGECOACH



NEW LOOK FOR AUSTRIAN POSTBUS

Austria's state-owned Postbus undertaking has relaunched itself with a golden livery, revamped logo and redesigned uniforms. The corporate makeover comes after the merger earlier this year of Postbus with Bahnbus, the bus fleet run by federal ÖBB Railways, which bought the now 98-year-old Postbus from Austrian Mail in 2003.

The new livery is officially termed 'quartz yellow' with the Postbus logo now written as one word in brushed-aluminium letters next to a stylized posthorn

symbol and a strapline describing it as a member of the 'ÖBB group of companies'. Previously, it called itself Post.Bus. The shuttle service between Vienna city and the airport is still branded as Vienna Airport Lines — powered by Postbus.

Around 50 of this year's intake of new vehicles, mainly Mercedes-Benz Integros (pictured), Temsa Safaris and a few MAN low-floor service buses, have been delivered in the new livery. The new logo will be

applied throughout the combined fleet, but Postbus orange, yellow and white and Bahnbus signal red are set to be around for some time as extensive repainting is not planned.



DUTCH PREPARE CONNEXION FOR SALE

The Netherlands government is expected to announce details of the sale of Connexion — the state-owned bus, tram, ferry and taxi group — by early next year.

After recording losses of Euro26 million in 2001 and 2002, Connexion made profits of Euro21 million in 2003 and Euro23 million last year. Reports suggest that the business, whose public transport division runs 2,480 buses, may be broken up into three parts for sale. The public transport division also operates two trains, 27 trams and

15 ferries, while the Hermes Group division has 418 buses and Connexion Tours has 275 coaches.

Last year, it retained seven of the nine transport concessions put out to tender, losing operations in Veluwe and eastern Utrecht. This year, it lost 150 vehicles' worth of work to the north of Amsterdam to Arriva, which takes over from 12 December with 48 new articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaros, ten 12m Scania OmniCitys and vehicles from its reserve fleet in the north of the country.



Left: Connexion placed 50 of these 12.8m Volvo 8700LEs in service in August on Interliner routes around The Hague, Leiden and between Alphen aan de Rijn, Schiphol Airport and Amsterdam city centre. HARRY LAMING

NATEX CONCLUDES ALSA TAKEOVER DEAL

The National Express Group has agreed a £262 million takeover of Alsa, the leading private sector coach and bus operator in Spain (Global News last month). The deal, which is subject to

clearance by the Spanish competition authorities, will make Alsa — with 1,400 buses and coaches — a separate division of NatEx. Most operations are in Spain, but it operates buses in

Portugal and Morocco and long distance coach services across western Europe. The Cosmen family, which owns Alsa, will take a 15% stake in NatEx and Alsa president Jorge Cosmen

becomes a non-executive NatEx director.

The Cosmen family will retain ownership of their businesses in China and South America, which are not part of the deal.

PARIS SPLITS ORDERS BETWEEN IRISBUS AND SCANIA

RATP, the Paris public transport undertaking, has split its latest orders for low-floor buses between Irisbus and Scania.

It is buying 850 of the new Irisbus Citelis, which replaces the Renault-designed Agora that forms the backbone of the 4,300-vehicle RATP fleet. The Scania order comprises up to 300

OmniCitys to be built in Poland. The initial order calls for 125, with an option for a further 175 and follows the purchase of 15 in 2001.

Significantly, the orders allow RATP to evaluate the competing Euro4 low emission engine technologies. Irisbus uses selective catalytic reduction (SCR)

engines and AdBlue fuel additive, while Scania's new five-cylinder engine employs exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) and requires no additives.

Although RATP once bought only French buses, in recent years it has placed substantial orders with MAN and Mercedes-Benz as well as for French-built Agoras.

DE LIJN ORDERS EURO5 VOLVO, REINSTATES TROLLEYS

De Lijn, the operator serving Flemish-speaking Belgium, has placed its second order for the latest generation of low emission Volvo buses.

It is taking 36 Volvo B7RLEs with VDL Jonckheere bodies and

the new D7E 7litre engine developed jointly with Deutz. Most will have Euro4 engines, but one will meet the even stricter Euro5 limits due to be introduced in 2009.

Meanwhile, De Lijn has also restored zero emission buses to

the streets of Ghent, where trolleybus services were suspended for over a year for major roadworks. At the time (Global News, March 2004), there were fears that the twenty 16-year-old Van Hool trolleybuses would not return to the city, but buses reverted to the original route from 1 September and trolleybuses were running by October.



n TEC, serving French-speaking Belgium, has ordered 73 Irisbus Agoras, 60 to operate in Charleroi and 13 in Brabant Wallon. It has also invited tenders for 233 additional buses.

Left: De Lijn Van Hool trolleybus 03 at Gentbrugge on 15 October. MURDOCH CURRIE

LAST-MINUTE REPRIEVE FOR AUWÄRTER

Germany's ailing midicoach builder Ernst Auwärter has been saved at the 11th hour by Austrian specialist vehicle maker Pucher.

The 50-year-old Linz-based firm took over all of Auwärter's activities from the beginning of September, installing Kurt Pucher and Harald Rath as managing directors at the Steinenbronn works near Stuttgart and hopes that modern production methods will boost annual output by 30%. Auwärter was to have been wound up and dissolved after it went into liquidation earlier this year (Global News, September).

Pucher builds and converts minibuses and is a supplier of specialist bodywork for the fire-fighting and civil defence sectors. The Austrian company retains the Auwärter name and

intends to continue production of the 38-seat Clubstar, which uses MAN running gear, and the Mercedes-based Super Sprinter minibus and Teamster midibus, but the tri-axle Mercedes-powered Eurostar has been dropped. Under the deal, 37 of Auwärter's former 150 employees are being kept on in Germany.

'The prospect of taking on Auwärter was daunting at first,

but I sincerely believe in the future of both the minibus and the midibus,' says Kurt Pucher. 'Auwärter will remain a premium marque. That fits in with our image. We are not regarded as being among the cheapest in Austria either,' says the trained saddlemaker who took over the family business 33 years ago with six employees. The Pucher group now employs 200 people.



A 27-seat Auwärter Teamster Combi-bodied Mercedes-Benz O818 at the Busworld exhibition in October.

IRISBUS QUILTS CHINESE VENTURE

Iveco-owned Irisbus has pulled out of its four-year old CBC-Iveco joint venture to build buses in China. 'This does not mean that we are looking to withdraw from this extremely important market, but simply that we want to work there under better conditions and with a reliable partner,' says Irisbus chief executive Jean Plénat.

BRITISH RAMPS FOR DURBAN MANS

British powered bus ramp specialist Compak has broken into the South African market with an initial order to supply bodybuilder Busaf with 10 powered ramps to be installed in low-floor MANs for Durban city services.

GERMAN COURT BLOCKS BUDGET COACH SERVICE

A pioneering 'no frills' interurban coach service in Germany has been forced off the road by the state-owned railway company, Deutsche Bahn.

A Berlin court ordered businesswoman Andrea Raschak to suspend all services after lawyers claimed she was stealing business from Bayern Express, the rail operator's own coach line in Bavaria. To travel with Ms Raschak's central bus hire company, or Mietbuszentrale, customers booked a projected journey online. Only if a minimum of 15 people came forward would the company hire a coach and run the service.

The clientele was made up of mainly students and other young people. The cheapest Euro9 (£6.50) tickets were sold first, with latecomers paying up to Euro39 per seat. Since June, she offered up to eight departures a day. She started the firm in Leipzig after losing her job as a railway ticket collector and currently employs 12 people.

The court says the connections between Berlin, Munich, Hamburg and Cologne are illegal since the company has no route concessions. German operators are also forbidden by law from cancelling scheduled services if patronage is too low. In an appeal, Ms Raschak's lawyers argue that the Mietbuszentrale services are exempt since they are one-off trips that do not adhere to a fixed timetable.



K6A, ST922 AND RMF STEAL THE 38 SHOW



Left: With every seat taken in its side gangway lowbridge ECW body, Ensignbus Bristol K6A TD895 (HLJ 44) steals some of the limelight from a retiring Routemaster in traffic at Hyde Park Corner. The grille-mounted LT roundel was a feature of all the K-types that the British Transport Commission drafted into London in the late-1940s. **Pictures by GEOFF RIXON**

You have to hand it to Ensignbus. Having produced a Craven-bodied RT and a lowbridge RLH on earlier running days, it marked the end of Routemasters on the 38 on 28 October by running a former Tilling Group Bristol K — 55 years after London Transport ran hired Bristols on this route.

The bus was authentic, a former Hants & Dorset K6A once used by LT, albeit not on the 38s. All the buses that Ensign produces for these events run in service, as guest vehicles. Luckily

the Bristol has a six-cylinder AEC engine, which, according to LT research at the time, was about 24% down on the performance of an RT. K5Gs, with Gardner five-cylinder engines, were about 50% down. LT used K5Gs on the 38 in 1950.

Both had a crash gearbox and slow gearchange,



Above: Forward-entrance RMF1254 became a pawn in a bitter pay dispute in London in the 1960s, leading eventually to its sale to Northern General, which had 50 similar buses of its own. As it heads along Piccadilly on 28 October, its first day in public service on a London bus route, it catches bright autumn sunshine.

Below: Also in Piccadilly the same day, ST922 carries invited guests along part of the 38 route.



which must have made for a hard day's driving. The K6A was not the only surprise of the day. Another first for these events was RMF1254, LT's solitary forward-entrance Routemaster, which never worked in London bus service. The nearest it got to that was running for British European Airways on the Heathrow Airport service. Then, it towed a luggage trailer as a trial for the production run of shorter BEA Routemasters. RMF1254 was exhibited at the 1962 Commercial Motor Show; 43 years later and in preservation, it finally worked a London bus route.

Also in evidence was the Cobham Bus Museum's former Tilling AEC Regent ST922, which operated heritage route 100 in the mid-1970s; it didn't run in service on the 38, but carried invited guests.

As with the end of Routemasters on the 13 two weeks earlier, a remarkable selection of guest buses — Routemasters of many colours, various RTs and an RTW — carried enthusiasts and the public. A departure from previous guest bus operations was that they didn't depart from Victoria bus station with normal 38s, but picked up one stop along, in Grosvenor Gardens.

Now it's all Arriva London articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaros, 46 of them, running every 3 to 6min for most of the day, instead of 50 Routemasters (plus spares) every 2 to 6min. Claims for the benefits of the Citaros on posters and in the leaflets publicising the change have been torn down and there's no longer a claim of 'more comfort'.

The new buses are based at Ash Grove, but drivers still sign on and off at Clapton. EvoBus is responsible for maintenance, and will use Clapton garage initially. When the garage is mothballed around April, they move to Ash Grove and buses on routes 242 (Tottenham Court Road-Homerton) and 254 (Aldgate-Holloway) move to Stamford Hill following the winding down of Leaside Travel's operations. Drivers will still all sign on at Clapton.

START OF HERITAGE ROUTES, TWO DAYS OF MOURNING PLANNED FOR THE 159s

By the time you read this, refurbished Routemasters — retaining their original registrations — will have taken up duty on the two heritage services due to start on 14 November.

First London operates them on route 9 (Aldwych-Royal Albert Hall) from Westbourne Park garage, Stagecoach East London the 15 (Trafalgar Square-Tower Hill) short workings from its Waterden Road, Stratford garage.

Two days of activity are planned for the last 'proper' Routemaster route, the 159 (Marble

Arch-Streatham). The enthusiasts' day with guest vehicles will be Thursday 8 December, with the changeover to Arriva London one-person operated VLA-class Volvo B7TLs taking place between 11.00 and 13.00. The final scheduled journey leaves Marble Arch at noon, preceded a few minutes earlier by duplicates. The daytime changeover is because of considerable public, media and enthusiast interest and for safety reasons as Brixton garage is on a busy road.

AS YOU WERE, WITH ONE BIG EXCEPTION

The latest tender results, with one notable exception, signal no change of operator, which must have been a welcome surprise for existing operators London Central and London General. For these tenders included Wandsworth routes, and there were strong rumours that Arriva London and Travel London were anxious to gain a foothold.

London Central retains its one foot in the area with the peak scheduled requirement on double-deck routes 37 (Peckham-Putney) and N37 rising by one to 19. New buses will replace the present Alexander ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TLs.

Sister Go-Ahead company London General retains seven routes, all with existing vehicles. The 424 (Putney Heath-Fulham) remains at four single-deckers and the 219 (Wimbledon-Clapham Junction) at 11 single-deckers. Double-deck 44 (Tooting-Vauxhall) and N44

gain an extra two buses to 16 on weekdays, while the 77 (Waterloo-Tooting) drops two to 16. The 270 (Putney Bridge-Mitcham) increases by one to 13, while schooldays 670 (Clapham Junction-Putney Heath) needs two double-deckers.

The 'new' 437/N437 need 21 buses against 19 on the 77A and N77, which they replace. The 77A is London's last A-suffixed route, but I'm not sure I can see any particular reason for doing this. Is 437 really any easier to remember?

Go-Ahead's delight at retaining these routes will be tempered by the knowledge that a big staff recruiting effort is needed for four routes and 50-plus buses for the recent wins from Arriva London South (In London, October).

The notable exception to all this is that route 127 (Purley-Tooting) will move from Centra to Metrobus, also a Go-Ahead company,

changing from 10 single-deckers and one double-decker to 10 double-deckers. This must be a blow for Centra, which only picked up the pieces when Mitcham Belle ran into problems 14 months ago. It is the first of its six London routes to come up for re-tender, and was also Mitcham Belle's first London contract.

Centra has had more difficulty sorting out its inherited problems than it expected, and there is still some public criticism of its operations. The start of the new contract is yet to be agreed, suggesting it may be sooner than the mid-2006 date specified for the Wandsworth routes. The 127 experienced problems before Mitcham Belle got involved. It was taken away from Arriva Croydon & North Surrey in 1998. London General took over, but sub-contracted half to Stagecoach Selkent, later to Blue Triangle.

VIEW FROM THE TOP AT STAGECOACH LONDON

The new Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-decker isn't yet ready for volume production, thinks Stagecoach London managing director Barry Arnold. Talking to the London Omnibus Traction Society in October, he said the bus — a direct replacement for the Trident destroyed in the 7 July bombing — has returned to its manufacturer for modifications, two of them quite major.

However, Stagecoach won't require many new London buses over the next few years. That is largely because the tendering system allows two-year extensions to existing well-run contracts — something he welcomes — although tendering lately has become more competitive.

He jokes that this could see some London buses kept for 14 years, but it will allow Stagecoach to focus investment on other cities. It has begun refurbishing its London Tridents,

with extra opening windows installed upstairs. Five have been fitted with air cooling systems and another 50 will follow.

Although it operates articulated Citaros and he says they are 'a darned sight easier' to drive than a Trident, Barry Arnold suspects that London has reached the end of the road in finding new uses for them. Once Arriva converts the 29 in January, he doesn't think any more sufficiently high passenger flows will be left on roads suitable for them. Not that he is against artics, having been sold on their crowd-shifting capabilities after *Buses* columnist Andrew Braddock — then head of Transport for London's mobility unit — took him to Europe in 1999.

He also told LOTS how Stagecoach came to buy two London companies 11 years ago. Employees offered £28 million for East London. Stagecoach matched that, but in conjunction with a £14 million bid for Selkent, for which

others only offered £9 million. Attempts to solve Selkent's problems with lower wages and longer hours led to a strike. London Transport rejected a proposal to replace 50 new buses for route 53 with older buses.

Attempts to sell the company were unsuccessful, so 'we decided we'd have a go at running it ourselves'. There were 24 different pay rates for drivers and morale was at rock bottom, but staff probably realised there was nowhere else to go and gradually the problems were sorted. Today, most Stagecoach London drivers — he says they are 'fantastic' — earn £530 for a basic 38hr week, though wage costs are a worry.

Land acquisition for the 2012 Olympics will take both Stagecoach garages in Stratford, as well as a First London one there. However, Stagecoach has located two possible new sites.



Above: As we reported last month, First has taken over route 150 (Becontree Heath-Chigwell Row) from Transport for London-owned East Thames Buses. Twelve new 72-seat Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs for this contract include VNW32659 (LK55 AAE). They conform to the latest TfL specifications, with all-red livery, air cooling equipment mounted over the shallow windows above the stairs and rationalised destination displays showing only the ultimate destination. **STEVE MASKELL**

SHORT HOPS

London's buses should be among the largest users of bio diesel fuel made from used cooking oil, says a report on its market potential.

The London Transport Users' Committee, the capital's public transport watchdog, has changed its name to London TravelWatch.

Penalty fares will rise from £20 to £50 in a new Transport for London Bill going before parliament in November. It also seeks powers for TfL to apply for anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) for persistent perpetrators of low-level disorder on buses and tubes.

New vehicles should be designed for the climate they will experience in their lifetime, says a report by the Atkins consultancy on the effects on London's transport systems of long-term climate change (mainly wetter winters and hotter summers).



Time to skip the 20-year upheaval of the industry

History may suggest that the bus industry goes through a revolution every other decade, but is it really necessary now

AB's thoughts (Inside Track last month) have clearly been trundling along the same track as mine, even if they've then taken a slightly different route at one of the junctions on the way.

As a colleague of mine, who is still (very) active at a senior level in the bus industry, reminded me the other day, buses tend to be subjected to major change about once every 20 years. Think about it: deregulation and privatisation in mid-1980s, National Bus Company and the PTEs at the end of the 1960s, nationalisation in the late-1940s, the 1930 Road Traffic Act. So, in 2005, is it about time for another big upheaval?

The signals seem confusing. Bus operators apparently breathed a sigh of relief at Alistair Darling's return to transport (even if Alistair Darling didn't), because they know that *he* knows that a return to local authority control won't deliver value for money. Darling certainly doesn't seem minded to give in lock, stock and barrel to the heavy lobbying the PTEs are currently engaged in.

On the other hand, a sizeable number of MPs, no doubt heavily briefed by the PTEs, has expressed dissatisfaction with the current bus regulatory regime. And what is perhaps more important, the PTE Group seems now to have got its act together and is beginning to make a more sensible-sounding case than it has in the past, and that is bound to gain it support.

Where are the voices of the innovative bus industry?

What I find worrying is that the bus industry seems reluctant or unable to demonstrate effectively what it has achieved over the past 10 years or so, without big calls on the

public purse. It may feel that it has Darling's ear, and that that is enough. I disagree. Darling may be gone tomorrow and be replaced by a less objective minister. Or he may stay and be over-ruled. This government's record hardly gives cause for comfort. On the recent *File on 4* on Radio 4 devoted to buses, the industry failed properly to answer a charge of lack of innovation, or to drive home just what it has delivered.

Where was Brian Souter to enthuse about growth in Cambridge, or Megabus and Kick-Start and the other innovations Stagecoach has pioneered? Or Giles Fearnley to espouse Blazefield's achievements? Or Chris Moyes for Go-Ahead? There may have been a time when the industry was best served by keeping its head down, but I think that time is long past.

It is time too that some of the folk myths about deregulation are exposed. Peter Hendy — a beacon of sense every time he speaks in public — has consistently made it clear that London has had to spend enormous amounts of money to develop its bus network. He is far too modest to add that it needs someone like him in charge to ensure that it is money well spent (and even Transport for London is less than perfect in this respect).

Peter might also stress more often that London is in a category by itself, and cannot be compared with even our largest PTEs. It is experiencing significant population growth, largely from an urban, flat-dwelling non-car owning population for whom public transport, especially buses, is the *only* travel option. London is also the only British city with a centre large enough that large numbers of people need to transfer from one route or

mode to another to reach their ultimate destination.

It is for all these reasons, and because of the intense pressure on road space over a wide area, that London can justify an integrated, regulated system and invest the huge sums of public money that have led to its large bus patronage growth.

By comparison, our other conurbations are much more suburban, more like outer London — and TfL has not cracked outer London yet. PTE areas are still seeing big rises in first-time car ownership, leading to congested roads and unattractive bus services with still insufficient priorities. It is hardly surprising that patronage declines are larger here than anywhere else.

Re-regulation isn't the answer, nor are quality contracts — although I would like to see more statutory quality partnerships to keep both bus operators *and* local authorities to their promises.

Integration isn't the answer for everyone in the UK

Integration may be a major issue in London, but it is a minor one in our other conurbations. It is needed to connect with trains, provide access to hospitals and so forth, but such minority services can easily be provided under current arrangements, and this limited requirement doesn't justify re-regulation.

What most people need is a fast, cheap, frequent, direct, reliable and clean service from where they live to their centre. The key to this is highway demand management — road charging, bus priorities, parking management, and so on — and falls right into the local authorities' court. This seems to be the direction government is headed, but it won't be popular with the electorate, so don't hold your breath.

If local government is willing to spend vast sums of our money to make space for uneconomic trams, then it can make the same space available for buses without spending such large sums. We *do* need better guarantees that bus operators won't fail to deliver their part of the bargain, but the traffic commissioners can easily manage this if given the right guidelines.

What we don't want is to risk losing the efficiency and innovation gains of the past 20 years to satisfy an unnecessary desire for control. So let's buck history and cancel upheaval this time round.

Left: One of the innovations of recent times has been the Brookes Bus network in Oxford, provided by Stagecoach for staff and students at Oxford Brookes University as well as the general travelling public. TransBus ALX300-bodied MAN 18.220 22054 (VX53 VNK) was delivered in Brookes Bus livery.





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Are you ready for the Winter months ?

- **London Bus Magazine** (no. 133) includes articles entitled *Declaring Independents* which looks at independent operators in the London area, *On the London Road in Leicester* which is a review of former London buses in Leicester, as well as the usual *Around & About* quarterly review and book reviews. Our quarterly glossy magazine is now **full colour** (except where we have historical articles) and in this issue also illustrates the last days of the Olympian, route X26 a new livery in Crawley and much much more. £5.00 (£4.00 to members).



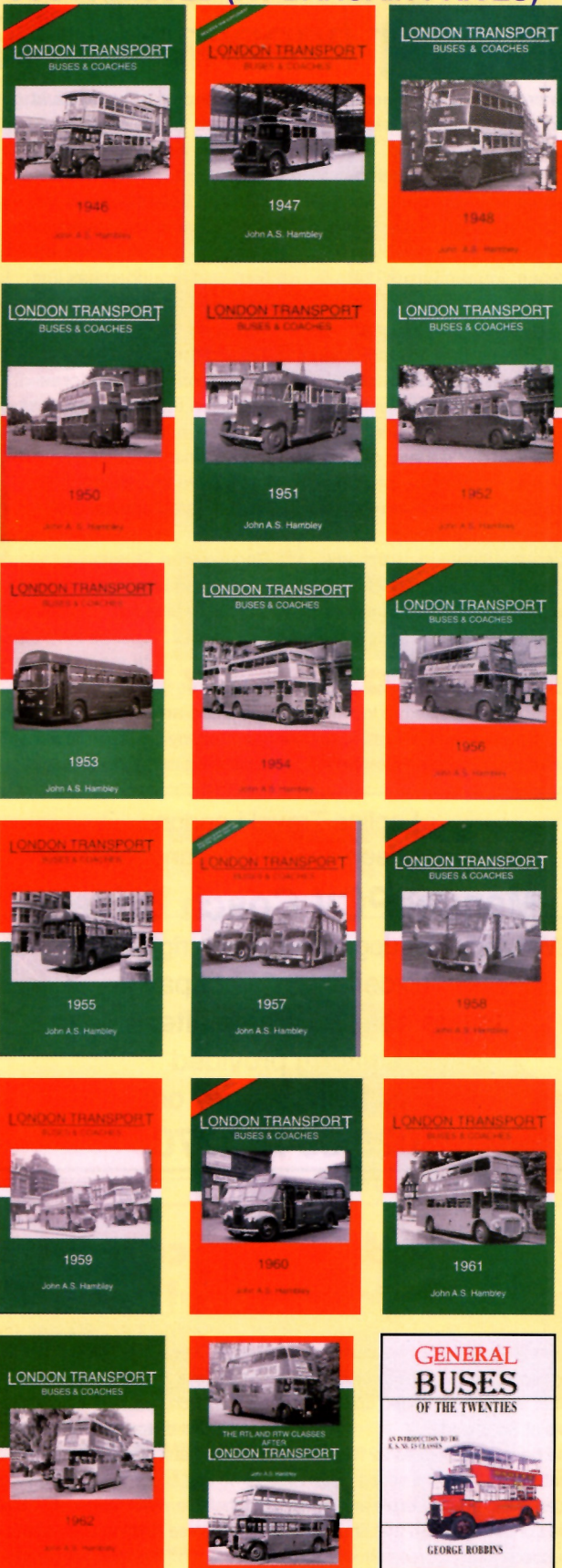
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Whatever happened to...? ...Centra Passenger Services

As the proprietor of Premier of Stainforth might have observed (he was called Harold Wilson, which may ring bells if you remember a namesake who was quite important in Britain in the 1960s and early 1970s), a year is a long time when you run buses.

Take Centra Passenger Services. This bus wing of an American concern, Central Parking Systems, seemed to be acquiring almost anything in sight last year. Our December 2004 issue reported that its fleet had grown to 290 with the acquisition of Flights of Birmingham from Dunn-Line, which itself was preparing for a stock market flotation. It already had bought Hallmark Coaches, Mitcham Belle, ThamesBus and

the remnants of Locallink at Stansted.

Today, it's back to running little more than the former Mitcham Belle business, which after a shaky start when much of the acquired fleet was grounded has just been told it's losing Transport for London route 127 to Metrobus.

The rest of the business has been renamed Flights Hallmark and was sold over the summer to Rotala, an Alternative Investment Market-listed company of which former Central Parking man Stuart Lawrenson is a non-executive director.



Above: Y3 HMC, a Plaxton Panther-bodied Dennis R-series new to Hallmark, in Centra livery at this year's EFE Showbus International in Duxford.

A BRANCH OF FAWLTY COACHES?

Judging by the spelling, it looks as though Dave and Judy at Leoline have a Spanish waiter in mind for filling a vacancy on their driving staff. My thanks to Graham Burnell for spotting the ad in the *Kingston Informer*.

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Who needs a halfcab when you can have a full one?

I can understand how it happened, but apparently a huge myth broke out after this vehicle turned up on the streets of Southport.

The beast identified as 92106 in the national numbering series rejoices in the name *Herbie* and is an old London FX4 taxi that shuttles Stagecoach staff between Stockport bus station and Charles Street

depot. Only John Young, who took this picture and works for Stagecoach, tells me it threw the town's taxi drivers into a Major League panic when they saw the name that accompanied the stripes on the side. Was Megacab, Magic Taxi or Wee Knitting Cars about to run them off the road with web-booked flat fares of £1.50?



Pulling strings for the Routemaster



With Status Quo appearing twice recently in *Coronation Street*, it seems that the whole world is a stage these days for classic rockers.

And certainly this Arriva driver whom Geoff Rixon encountered at Clapton Pond on 28 October, the last day of Routemasters on London route 38, thinks so. Apparently inspired by the advertising on RML2401 for the Queen tribute musical at the Dominion Theatre, he

joined in the festivities by rocking the onlookers with his own choice of numbers.

Mind you, this also shows how far standards have changed in London from when Routemasters represented the state of the art of bus design. What would Frank Pick have said if told that Wranglers, polo necks and white trainers would be *de rigueur* uniform within our lifetimes?

A name with a ticket to ride

L. J. K. Setright wasn't a man you would ever expect to catch riding a bus. A highly eccentric motoring journalist with a passion for Bristol cars rather than buses, he detested speed limits and diesel-engined vehicles with equal passion.

He died, age 74, in September and the various newspaper obituaries to this one-off writer revealed that it was no mere coincidence that his name was the same as that on thousands of bus

ticket machines. His father, who died when Leonard John Kensell was 11, founded a family light engineering company that produced — among many other things — the Setright ticket machine. As they clung terrified to their seats in one of his Bristols, it might not have surprised L. J. K.'s passengers to learn that the pinnacle of the firm's achievements was the machine known as the Setright Speed.

20 YEARS AGO

Our December 1985 Fleet News reports included mention of the delivery of Greater Manchester Transport 1751, the first of 20 Northern Counties-bodied Dennis Domino midibuses, in late August. 'No reports of any being in service had been received by mid-October,' added Fleet News editor Gordon Watts.

In fact, they trickled into service between November and the following February, ousting GMT's 10-year-old Seddon Midibuses from the high-profile Centreline route in the heart of Manchester. The Domino was hardly Dennis's

greatest success, notching up sales of just 34 vehicles (the other 14 went to South Yorkshire PTE and had early Optare bodies), but it was the over-complicated forerunner of the vastly more successful Dart.

It was 25ft 2in long, 7ft 6in wide and — as specified by GMT — had 24 seats and space for 14 standees. Power was from a Perkins 6.354 engine in the back, driving through a four-speed Maxwell gearbox. GMT's buses had been ordered along with 30 Dennis Dominators and had parts — like axles and large diameter wheels — in common with the double-decker.



The original talking bus stop?

I'm not sure how well you'll be able to read it, but the handwritten sign on this bus stop in the Pennine village of Denshaw reads:

*Bus stop recited
223 service now stops
by the shelter past the
x-roads to-wards
Manchester*

My thanks to Jeremy Grayson for passing on this evidence of poetic justice from those who relocate a bus stop.



EXECUTIVE CANNONBALL OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to Andy Greenwood of Nottingham, who wins a Corgi 1/76th-scale diecast model for sending me evidence of a Plaxton Supreme that truly goes like a rocket.

Don't be misled by the 'Executive' branding at the back of the coach that began life registered WJS 199X, for its role in life these days is to blast human cannonballs out of the crude pipe on the back.

Keep your eyes open and camera at the ready for your own offbeat colour picture opportunities and send the results to me at the usual address. You, too, could win a Corgi diecast.

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London's last Leylands

The first of London Buses' 263 ECW-bodied Olympians, Leyland-engined L1 (A101 SYE), on route 170 at Danebury Avenue, Roehampton on 27 October 1984. **GEOFF RIXON**



As **MATTHEW WHARMBY** explains, the move to 100% low-floor operation has spelt the end of another era for the buses of the UK capital

From all that you may have read and heard recently, you might imagine that the only era ending in London this year is the long one of Routemasters, conductors and open platforms. But the move to 100% low-floor operation has also spelt the end for the Leyland (and Volvo) Olympian — and the best part of 70 years of Leyland double-deckers bought by London Transport, its successors and

contractors. While AEC won a 10-year contract to supply 90% of LT's motorbuses from the undertaking's formation in 1933, Leyland was a significant supplier. It built many of the trolleybuses, STD-class Titans before and after World War 2, supplied LT with its first rear and underfloor-engined single-deckers and built 1,631 RTL and 500 RTW-class double-deckers between 1948 and 1954.

Below: The Leyland heritage in August 1965. With an FX4 taxi in hot pursuit, all-Leyland 8ft-wide 6RT Titan RTW190 (KLB 920) negotiates Marble Arch, its conductor on the platform and its advertising space promoting cigarettes and whisky . . . but not — in the words of the song — wild, wild women. **GEOFF RIXON**



It supplied running units for two prototype Routemasters and engines for 626 production examples, built 50 Atlanteans (LT's first and none-too-successful rear-engined double-deckers), badged and built the last 679 DMS-class Fleetlines in the 1970s, before supplying the Titan, the last double-decker designed primarily for London.

The last Leylands to operate on a red London bus route were Alexander-bodied Olympians that formed the final 40 members of London Buses' L class. After 13 years, they slipped away from the 103 route even before 14 October 2005, that route's last day with Arriva London North's Barking garage. Five weeks previously, the last Eastern Coach Works-bodied Olympians — the original L class that comprised the last annual London Buses order — ended their days at Arriva London South's Norwood garage on routes 249 and 432.

Country bus start, AVE follow-up

L-class buses, ironically, were not the first Olympians to operate a traditional LT route. Two years before L1 arrived, London Country — the National Bus Company subsidiary serving the old LT Country Area — took over former red bus route 84 (St Albans-New Barnet) as part of a trend to provide cheaper replacement services in the surrounding counties. On 24 April 1982, the first of the company's LR class

Right: London Olympians came in many shapes and colours. Armchair Passenger Transport H551 GKX was one of 17 Leyland-bodied examples new in 1991 — when this photograph was taken — for tendered route 65. The 23 for London United were similar to these. **GEOFF RIXON**

of Roe-bodied Olympians began a process that would later see London Country take over other cross-border routes and win tendered routes deeper into the capital. London Country eventually took 60 of these buses, followed by 15 buses and 15 coaches bodied by ECW.

With Leyland finally killing off the Titan and pressure building for London Buses to cut costs and move away from bespoke designs, LT embarked on its Alternative Vehicle Evaluation (AVE) trial of four double-deck designs in 1984. Three ECW-bodied Olympians (L1-3) entered service on trial route 170 on 26 March 1984, followed at intervals by two MCW Metrobus MkIIs, two Volvo Ailsas and three Dennis Dominators. L1 had a Leyland TL11 engine, L2 and L3 Gardner 6LXBs.

This led to an order for 260 similar 6LXB-engined Olympians, incorporating modifications decided upon during trials with modified Fleetlines DMS2377 and 2456 during 1985. These included a split-step entrance, forward-mounted straight staircase, three-step exit and the introduction throughout of green-coloured handrails and yellow-and-black saw tooth-patterned strips on all step edges.

L4-263 were delivered between February 1986 and February 1987. The original plan was to allocate them all to Wandsworth District in south London, but the decision to retain the newest B20-type DMSs meant that the first went to south-east London instead, entering service at Plumstead, Sidcup, Bexleyheath and New Cross. Later deliveries went to Norwood, which received 50 in the autumn of 1986, then Clapham (whose work passed to a reopened Streatham in February 1987) and Croydon.

It was thought that London Buses would order further Ls, but in the fast changing world of London bus operation, that was not to be and, perhaps partly because of this, the ECW factory at Lowestoft closed after the completion of L263, whose interior panels were signed by coachbuilders. This was the last of four coach-seated examples for Selkent Travel, following on from successful trials involving L166-171, the batch dedicated to semi-express route X68. In their first year in service, L260-3 gained former Routemaster registrations VLT 20, 2 CLT, VLT 14 and VLT 9; eventually, 25 of the 263 carried similar cherished marks.

Instead of large batches of standard Olympians, London Buses bought secondhand double-deckers and larger numbers of new minibuses, and the Ls shared routes with other, often older types. In order to have suitable vehicles for tendered services, Plumstead's Ls transferred to Thornton Heath, while Norwood gained older Titans and regained Metrobuses.

Two short-lived East Lancs-bodied Olympian coaches, LC1 and LC2, arrived in 1986 for a London-Eastbourne route shared with Eastbourne Buses, which took two of the same. It didn't last and the coaches moved on.



Above: The last Leyland Olympians delivered to a London operator were five with Alexander RH-type bodies for London Buslines, which arrived in 1993. CentreWest took over the business along with other bus operations of its Q Drive parent company in 1996 and was itself acquired by First a year later. By September 1997, LA25 (L25 GAN) wore its new owner's Challenger branding when photographed at Ealing Common. Today, this is bus 30735 in Huddersfield. **GEOFF RIXON**

Not just red London Olympians

The tendering process saw Olympians of many colours operating on LT services from the mid-1980s. As a prelude to privatisation, London Country was split into four on 7 September 1986 and their new owners adopted new names and identities for most of the businesses.

In 1990, London Country North West, Kentish Bus and County Bus all bought new Olympians for LT tendered services. So did then independent Metrobus (which already had ex-West Yorkshire PTE examples), Cityrama, Boro'line Maidstone (with Optare bodywork), Armchair, BTS, London Buslines, Ensignbus (and its successor Capital Citybus) and Thamesway. London Buses also added 91 members to its L class by leasing or buying small batches of Olympians for specific contracts. Treasury rules meant that 28 of them could only be kept for three years after delivery in 1987.

These were the Northern Counties-bodied buses — diverted from a Greater Manchester Buses order — for the Bexleybus network. This attempted a clean break with the past by introducing a new

blue and cream livery and an independent fleetnumbering system. The whole network was lost on re-tender after reliability problems were turned around too late.

These buses (like the Metrobuses on the Harrow Buses network) went then because the Treasury only permitted state-owned undertakings like London Buses to lease vehicles for the period of a route contract. These leases were more expensive than those available to private sector operators, which could lease buses for something closer to their expected lives. Other operators — notably Busways in Newcastle and Fareway in Liverpool — grabbed the chance to acquire these nearly new buses.

The other 63 Ls — with Cummins L10 engines — arrived after 1989 when London Buses was split into separate subsidiary companies, each of which could bid for its own vehicle requirements. The first 23 went to London United early in 1990. These had Leyland bodywork built at Workington and were for the Riverside Bus-branded 237; three with coach seats ran in summer 1991 on a short-lived Airbus route to Stansted Airport.



Left: A September 1997 view in West Croydon, showing L35 (C35 CHM) in Cowie South London livery, with a similar bus about to follow behind. **GEOFF RIXON**

Below: Grey-Green 401 (H101 GEV), a Northern Counties-bodied 77-seater new to County Bus in 1990 and acquired the following year, pulling past a line of East London Titans at Romford station in 1992. As with the driver's 'uniform' on p20 this month, what would Frank Pick have said about a London bus running to a destination apparently called 'Service'? This was the last Leyland route in London. **ALAN MILLAR**



In 1992, Leaside Buses got the other 40, with Alexander RH-type bodies and Scottish registrations, for the busy former trolleybus 253 route. Like most London Buses vehicles delivered in the immediate pre-privatisation period, they had bright blue-based moquette and red handrails.

They were not the last Leylands for London, however, as London Buslines got five with single-door Alexander RH-type bodies in late-summer 1993. By then, Volvo — which acquired Leyland Bus in 1993 — had dropped the Leyland name and re-engineered the Olympian so future deliveries to London and elsewhere would be badged as Volvos.

Three-way split, three fates

The 1989 restructure divided L1-263 between the London Central (15), Selkent (87) and South London (161) fleets. Privatisation put these businesses respectively in Go-Ahead, Stagecoach and Cowie (later renamed Arriva) ownership.

London Central's 15, all at New Cross nominally for route 89, were considered non-standard and were replaced with older Titans in 1998. Rossendale Transport bought 10 of them. Selkent began replacing its Ls as Dennis Tridents poured in. Catford's left first and the company's last, based at Plumstead,

departed in December 1999. While Stagecoach cascaded many London Titans to other group fleets, only a handful of Ls saw further service with the group; most went to the Ensignbus dealership at Purfleet.

The Arriva buses lasted longest in London. Arriva London South's bid to retain routes 2 and 249 was placed with the intention to refurbish 41 Ls with new interiors. The pleasing and much welcomed results were described in August 2000 *Buses*, though buses with Voith gearboxes in place of their Hydracyclic units could soon be identified from a distance by a hollow croaking noise as they approached. Many of the refurbished Ls were cascaded away early when Arriva East Herts & Essex needed them for the 310 group of routes in 2003.

The rest soldiered on as before, with allocations added to Brixton in January 2001 and to Beddington Farm eight months later, completing the roster of Arriva London South garages to have operated the type. When the supply of Routemasters for the increases to crew routes ran dry, Ls deputised with conductors aboard. London United repainted all-Leyland L293-312 in its attractive livery with grey roof and grey skirt. In 1998, they were moved from the 237 to the equally taxing 140, receiving a smart route-branding scheme in the process. Few survived the

subsequent loss of that route to Metroline, but the survivors gathered on the four-bus 116. When parent company Transdev bought London Sovereign, two headed there and shored up operations in a red and black livery.

Beginning of the end in south London

By 2004, the few remaining Arriva Ls were allocated only to spare duties. Arriva followed replacement of Beddington Farm's allocation by the conversion to new VDL Bus double-deckers of the last L-operated routes at Thornton Heath (the 109) and Croydon (50). Both garages' final Ls, plus those of Brixton, ended their days within three weeks of each other in May/June last year, leaving Norwood as the last operator of the class.

Trunk route 2 was upgraded with new long-wheelbase VLA-class Volvo B7TLs in the last months of 2003, but its outermost section to Crystal Palace had been separated as the 432 and retained Ls. Twenty Ls stayed put to allow early DLA-class DAFs to be refurbished. Unusually, some were repainted, with L102/62 among possibly the oldest Arriva buses to lose their cows' horn swoops.

Only eight were left by late summer this year, and delivery of new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts released a sufficient number of DLAs to see them off officially from 3 September. On the previous day, two of them worked the 249 and six the 432. Two, including all-red L102, crept out on to the 432 on the Saturday. But Transport for London's insistence that school routes 689/690, due to resume the following Monday, be operated by low-floor buses, rendered that their last hurrah.

As well as being the last double-deckers with at least a partial input into their design by the old London Transport, they were also the last Gardner-engined buses to see service in the capital.

In the weeks leading up to 15 October the last Leyland Olympians of all in London (a mix of G-VBB Northern Counties new to Kentish Bus and Alexander-bodied J-BSH examples from the batch new to Leaside) were withdrawn when the 103 passed from Arriva (the former Grey-Green Barking garage) to Stagecoach. None of the former Kentish Bus examples was seen during their last week — just L319/24/37/9 from the newer batch.

Over 11 years, London-based operators bought 694 new Leyland Olympian buses, 279 bodied by ECW, 162 by Northern Counties, 103 by Leyland at Workington, 76 by Alexander, 60 by Roe and 14 by Optare.

While they have disappeared from London bus services, Leyland Olympians continue to perform other important tasks in the capital. Arriva has converted many of the ex-Leaside vehicles into OA-class open-top sightseeing buses and many others — some native to London, others acquired secondhand — operate on rail replacement duties and school bus routes.

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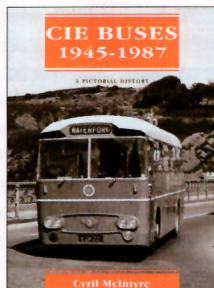
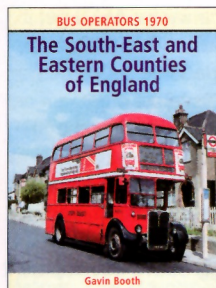
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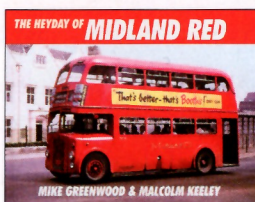
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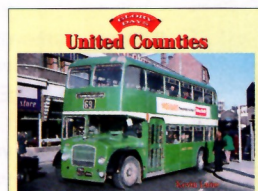
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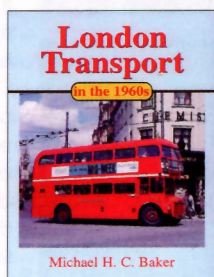
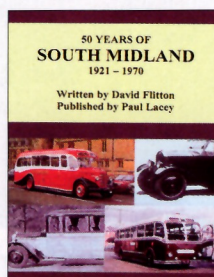
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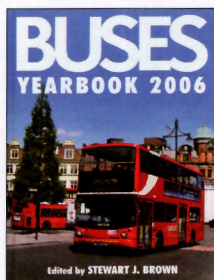
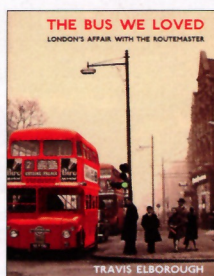


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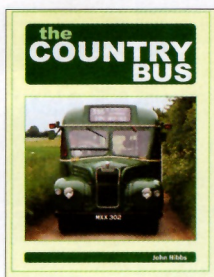


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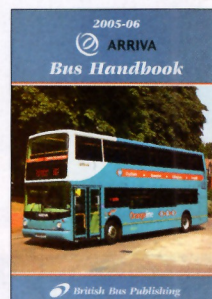
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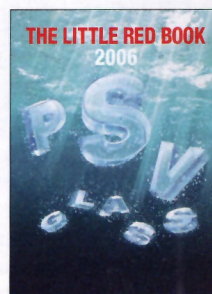
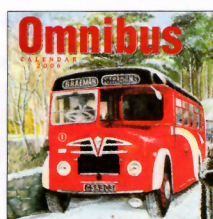


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Wraps come off Europe's latest models

ALAN MILLAR reports from the Busworld show, where fleet owners were dazzled by low-emission engines, glitzy new coaches and low-entry buses

A prototype of the new Jonckheere coach outside the exhibition halls in Kortrijk. A silver one was on the VDL stand indoors.



Above: Neoplan Starliner, voted Coach of the Year.



Above: Latest version of an old favourite, a Neoplan Skyliner double-decker

Every second year, Europe's bus and coach industry descends on the Belgian town of Kortrijk for Busworld — the biggest show of its kind where many manufacturers launch their latest models. To put this into perspective, the two-day Coach & Bus Live show in October attracted around 5,000 visitors to the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, but Busworld drew a record 25,236 from 107 countries over six days. No wonder the organisers of the UK shows are relaunching next year's NEC event on 7-9 November as Euro Bus Expo with a more international focus.

While Busworld is primarily a showcase for vehicles that might reach our shores within the next year or so, the most significant launches this year were the Euro4 and Euro5 engines developed to comply with the new emission limits next autumn.

Visitors heard competing claims about the durability and fuel economy of rival products from the two sides of the technological argument over Euro4 and Euro5. Did they believe the 80% represented by Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Iveco, Cummins and DAF that selective catalytic reduction (SCR) and AdBlue fuel additive is best? Or will Scania and MAN get it right with exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) in which, as one of them says, 'you only add diesel'?

With RATP in Paris splitting its latest order between the SCR-engined Irisbus Citelis and EGR-engined Scania OmniCity, maybe no one is yet confident of any of these claims. And there were clues that diesel engines as we know them may disappear. Volvo unveiled a gas version of its new 9.4litre diesel and promised aggressive development of hybrid electrics, while another manufacturer displayed the only trolleybus in the show.

A stunning new Jonckheere

Several of the new models are not going to appear in the UK until Euro4 engines are in production and capable of being engineered into place.

One of them — a stunning new Jonckheere coach body — won't be available here until the repowered Volvo B12B is ready for 2007. This was the centrepiece of the VDL Groep stand, the first at Busworld that brought together the VDL Bus, Bova, Berkhof, Jonckheere and Kusters brands. This combined business will build 1,700 vehicles and supply a further 600 drivelines to other manufacturers this year, all from factories in the Netherlands and Flemish-speaking Belgium.

Designer Axel Enthoven created the 3.8m high stainless steel coach to commemorate Jonckheere's 125th anniversary next year. And VDL has taken the unusual step of naming it simply the Jonckheere — or 'Yonk Heery' as managing director Tony Buyck pronounces it — rather than giving it a model name or number. We'll see if that idea survives its UK launch.

It is aimed at the premium end of the market, and besides the B12B will be available in 12.2m or three-axle 13.4m or 14m lengths on VDL SB and SBR4000 (as shown at Busworld) or Scania K-series chassis. It seats up to 59, but was exhibited with fewer and wider seats with centre armrests and a narrower aisle.

Besides its striking outside appearance, it impresses inside, with front glazing extending into the roof dome to provide passengers with enhanced forward vision. The entrance is wide enough for a wheelchair lift and it comes with two courier seats —

and a folding desk in front to hold notes or a laptop computer when making video presentations. The air conditioning unit is disguised within the roof and located above the front axle to improve weight distribution.

Starliner voted best in Europe

The new Jonckheere was too late into the market — the wraps came off on the day before Busworld opened to the public — for it to be a contender for the 2005 Coach of the Year accolade. That instead was another model still to appear in the UK, the new generation tri-axle **Neoplan Starliner SHD**.

Launched a year ago in 14m form, the 13m version — likely to have more UK appeal — was unveiled at Kortrijk. Neoplan has shortened it with little loss of luggage capacity; it has taken 650mm out of the rear overhang where the engine is and only 350mm out of the wheelbase, which contains the side lockers. Visually impressive in its original incarnation, the new Starliner takes the concept on to a new plane. Its sharply raked upper windscreen is — apparently — the largest yet applied to any coach. Anywhere. As with the Jonckheere, it provides better forward vision.

The ceiling and ventilation system maximise headroom for standing passengers, even under the luggage racks and next to the side windows. But I sense that the Coach of the Year judges were swayed most of all by its active and passive safety features — like headlights that see round corners, active cruise control to prevent collisions with vehicles slowing down in

Right: Probably the most ostentatious coach in the show, the Noge Titanium-bodied MAN first exhibited at the Madrid show.

front, and a lane guard alert that warns drivers if they stray off course on a motorway.

Besides this flagship, Neoplan — now part of MAN-owned Neoman — showed the restyled version of its classic Skyliner double-decker. The show coach had front and rear staircases to comply with European Union bus directive 2001/85. And it unveiled a 13m two-axle version of its Trendliner interurban coach, another model not yet available in the UK.

The Starliner and Jonckheere contrast with the conservative lines of the top-of-the-range **Volvo 9700 Prestige Plus**, a right-hand-drive example of which was on the manufacturer's stand. Time will tell if it is too restrained and unexciting for its own good at this end of the market or if timeless Nordic functionality triumphs over Flemish or German flamboyance.

Belgian timelessness has done **Van Hool** no

harm, preserving operators' residual values by only making small changes both to its former T8 range and to the T9, now entering its ninth year. For 2005, it gets a new elliptical moulding in the back, redesigned side locker handles and chrome window surrounds. Shows like this are a reminder, though, that the T9 range is more extensive than the coaches sold in the UK. There also is an Astromega double-deck coach and a 3m high bus. The contrast in approach was at its most stark on the **Noge** stand where the Spanish coachbuilder's two exhibits — both on MAN 18.460 — were adorned with dummy front grilles reminiscent of fast Italian cars.

On the Touring body established on the UK market, the effect is restrained if a little odd, but restraint definitely wasn't in evidence on



the Titanium body launched earlier in the year. Possibly the most ostentatious of all the coaches at Busworld, this is a mass of chrome hoops, curved glass, swept lines and huge two-piece rear engine doors divided by what looks like an enormous thong. This cross between a latter day Bugatti and Lady Penelope's Rolls-Royce will either become a design classic or a nine-minute wonder. I quite like it, but will it hold its value like a Van Hool T9?

Marcopolo explores new styles

Marcopolo unveiled two new models. The **Viaggio III** — shown in 3.7m high form on a Volvo B12B — is the third generation of the body now sold in the UK on MAN and Irisbus chassis. Unlike the current model, it is built in stainless steel and is substantially restyled. Besides the 370 variant shown, there also will be a 3.3m high 330 and a 3.5m 350. Completely new, and shown on a Scania K310, is the **Ideale 770**, a 3.2m high interurban coach with up to 55 seats. There also will be an 8.8m 32-seater on the Iveco EuroCargo truck chassis, with entrance behind the front axle.

Brazilian-owned Marcopolo may have a modest share of the UK market, but it is a force to be reckoned with. It expects to build 16,500 bodies at eight plants in South and Central America, South Africa and Portugal and supplies 90 countries. Production at the Coimbra plant in Portugal will have more than doubled in five years to 300 this year. Next year, that should reach 450.

Within feet of the Marcopolo stand, **Sitcar** — the Italian coachbuilder that sells the Beluga midicoach in the UK — showed a prototype of its larger Modena body with entrance ahead of the front axle. Like the Beluga, this 35-seater was on a Mercedes-Benz chassis, an Atego 1328LL. **Indcar**, whose Spanish midicoaches sell mostly on Irisbus chassis in the UK, offered a novel approach to the sightseeing market — an open-top Cabrio version of its Mago 2, with 31 plastic seats and a Mercedes Vario chassis. A convertible may follow, with folding fabric roof.

Another Spanish creation was the new-look **Hispano Divo**, shown on a Scania K-series destined for Greece. Hispano Carrocera isn't currently active in the UK coach market, but one way or another it has been in the past and don't be surprised if it is again. It bodied the Mercedes-Benz O404 for the UK and Ireland

Below: The Marcopolo Viaggio 370-bodied Volvo B12B.



Left: The new Marcopolo Ideale 770 interurban coach on a Scania chassis.



Above: Sitcar showed this prototype Modena 35-seat body on a Mercedes-Benz Atego chassis.



Above: The innovative open-top Indcar Mago Cabrio-bodied Mercedes Vario.



Above: Hispano has restyled its Divo body with a new front, shown on a Scania K-series.

and more recently built two Habit bus bodies — one rigid, one articulated — on Volvo B7L demonstrators. The Spanish operation dates back to the late-1930s and was owned by Van Hool between 1971 and 1993, supplying the UK market with its Aragon body in the late-1970s.

Since March, Tata — the giant Indian motor manufacturer — has owned 21% of Hispano. The message at Busworld was that this is a 'strategic alliance' between chassis and body builders, providing Hispano with the capital it needs to expand in markets like Morocco (where it has a plant) and the Middle East, and Tata with modern bodybuilding technology.

Temsa tops the Turkish delights

Busworld also provided tangible evidence of the speed at which Turkish bus and coach manufacturers are growing. BMC, so far the biggest volume seller in the UK, didn't exhibit at Kortrijk, but **Temsa** was there for its fourth show in succession. This is the manufacturer that entered the UK in April with 10 DAF-engined Safari 12m coaches sold through the Arriva Bus & Coach dealership. It combines low manufacturing costs with proven west European technology, design and sales skills to produce a world class range with professional aftermarket support. Judge its success by the size of its stand — up from 90sqm in 1999 to 1,200sqm



Above: The 1,000th Temsa for a French operator is this tri-axle Diamond, the Turkish manufacturer's top-of-the-range offering.



Above: Also known as 'The Box', the Temsa Tourmalin is aimed primarily at the large French schoolbus market. It has as many seats as a British Leyland Atlantean double-decker.



Above: The MAN-powered Anadolu Isuzu Harmony schoolbus has 43 seats in 3+2 formation.

this year. That was sufficient to display its complete range from 7.6m Opalin midi to 14m tri-axle Diamond, a Duple 425-like stunner launched at Kortrijk two years ago. The Diamond was for French operator Dupasquier, a loyal customer with 75 Temsas in its fleet, and significantly the 1,000th Temsa sold in France, the company's biggest European market so far. The Safari — also bought by Austria's Postbus — has been the backbone of the French success story and had you reached Kortrijk via Lille, you might have encountered a Safari on the airport service.

Shown internationally for the first time was its Tourmalin schoolbus — more like an old-style



UK grant coach — with up to 78 seats in 3+2 configuration at 12.8m. With commendable self-depreciation, Temsa brands this angular vehicle as 'The Box'.

Another Turkish schoolbus was on the **Anadolu Isuzu** stand. This joint venture with Isuzu of Japan showed three 7.7m long, two-door, rear-engined midis — an Isuzu-powered Turquoise and two MAN-powered Harmony models. The Turquoise and one Harmony were 26-seat coaches, but the other Harmony squeezed in 43 bus seats in 3+2 formation. Also from Turkey was the **Otokar** Navigo 165S, a 27-seat midicoach with four-cylinder Deutz engine.

Low-entry Citaro, low-floor Irisbus midi

The bus exhibits most likely to appear in the UK reflected increasing mainland European interest in UK-style low-entry as well as 100% low-floor vehicles. While many countries were several years ahead of us with low-floor citybuses, the UK has made more headway in using them on interurban and rural routes. That is beginning to change.

Indicative of this is the **Mercedes-Benz Citaro LE**, launched at Busworld to complement the full low-floor Citaro, of which over 12,000 have been sold since 1997. At first glance, it looks little different from the original model, although both sport a restyled front with a dummy grille moulding. Look more closely and you spot some fundamental changes.

The front half is common to both versions, but just as Volvo's B7RLE combines the front of the full low-floor B7L with the back end of the B7R coach, the back half of the Citaro LE is lifted out of the Travego coach sold in left-hand-drive markets. Its horizontal engine is mounted centrally at the rear and drives into an HO6 hypoid axle with centre differential, rather than the portal axle and offset diff on the standard

Citaro. Mercedes says this should be quieter and more fuel-efficient. The engine, initially at least, is the larger of the two offered in the Citaro, the 286 or 354hp 12litre OM457hLA. Mercedes might have to offer the 6.4litre OM906hLA to appeal to the shorter haul UK market for this type of bus.

Visually, the back half is a bit strange. To maintain adequate headroom, the roof is higher than at the front and so is the window line, with opening vents higher than the glazed area in the front half.

Scania's equivalent is the Polish-built OmniLink, which is coming to the UK and will also form the mechanical underpinning of the new version of the Wright Solar. The move to Scania's five-cylinder Euro4 and Euro5 engines spells the end for the L94UB chassis, with engine inclined to one side. The new buses will be based on the K-series with a vertical engine, albeit one that is more compact than its six-cylinder Euro3 predecessor. Nevertheless, the left-hand-drive K310 on Scania's stand — another high-powered long-haul bus — had two steps behind its centre door and another three to reach the rearmost seats. Maybe Wrightbus will do better when it gets hold of a chassis.

Much more promising was the **Irisbus GX127L**, a 10.6m long, 2.33m wide full low-floor midibus apparently destined for the UK. This is built by Heuliez in France with a 218hp Cummins-designed engine and Allison AT280R gearbox. If that spells out recognisable features of the Alexander Dennis Dart, you wouldn't be far wrong. Unlike the Dart, there isn't a step into the rear section, and as exhibited outside the exhibition halls, it appealed more to Continental tastes with

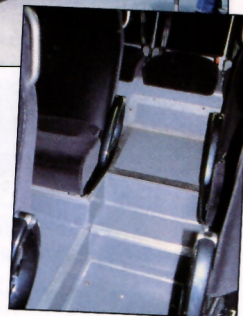
Left: A Mercedes-Benz Citaro LE for TEC, the main operator in French-speaking Belgium. The roof steps up from the centre door.



Above and inset: Outside and inside the Irisbus GX127L, with its low-level triangular standee windows.



Below and inset: Externally, the K-series version of the Scania OmniLink looks the same as its CL94UB-based predecessor, but inside it has three steps up to the back seats.



two doors, a mere 17 (mainly single) seats and alleged standing room for 77.

Coming away from the exhibition as one of significantly fewer sweating standees in a poorly ventilated Van Hool single-decker on the Kortrijk town network, I hope I'm never one of the 77 on a GX127L. But in one-door fully-seated form, it could be a promising UK urban bus. Heuliez has brightened up the interior with a novel take on the standee window — three triangular ones *below* the waistrail.

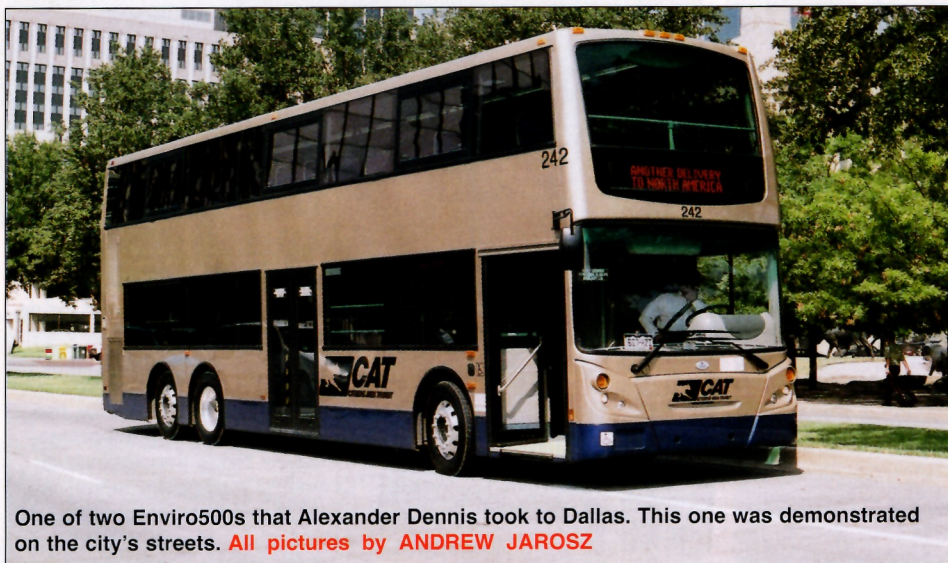
Those hoping that trolleybuses will return to UK streets would be encouraged by the centrepiece of the **Solaris** stand. This young Polish manufacturer — it has supplied right-hand-drive Malta, but has yet to reach the British Isles — has cornered the affordable European trolleybus market with its relatively inexpensive Trollino. It showed a 12m example for the Czech city of Ostrava. Solaris has more than tripled bus, coach and trolleybus production within three years and expects to build 720 this year.



Left: The only trolleybus in Kortrijk, a Solaris Trollino 12 for Ostrava.

Over Here sells Over There

ANDREW JAROSZ reports from America's three-yearly bus show, where a British double-decker attracted significant interest despite an apparent news blackout on its existence



One of two Enviro500s that Alexander Dennis took to Dallas. This one was demonstrated on the city's streets. All pictures by **ANDREW JAROSZ**



Above: A Blue Bird Ultra LF — a model designed in Britain with a front end similar to that on the Enviro300 — on the manufacturer's stand in Dallas.



Six years ago, First, National Express and Stagecoach were falling over themselves to buy into the North American transit market, and unsurprisingly so were some of the major bus manufacturers.

The 1999 Expo, organised by the American Public Transport Association (APTA), marked the debut of the Thomas Dennis SLF200 — the US version of the Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLF. There also was a new low-floor midibus designed in conjunction with Wrightbus and there were hints of another short product from Blue Bird, owned by Henlys, which also owned Plaxton and was joint owner with Volvo of Canadian-based NovaBUS and Prévost.

Unlike shows in the UK and Europe, Expo only takes place every three years, and a lot can happen in between. By 2002, Mayflower — which owned Dennis and Alexander — had merged its UK activities with Henlys to form TransBus.

And the Thomas Dennis Dart was under the control of joint venture partner DaimlerChrysler, renamed as an Orion product and powered by a Mercedes-Benz engine.

Optare had entered the market on behalf of its then owner North American Bus Industries, selling a left-hand-drive version of the Solo known as the NABI 30-LFN. And Blue Bird launched low-floor buses that looked uncannily like a Mini Pointer Dart and others with a similar Plaxton-designed front end as the TransBus Enviro300.

Another three years on and the Thomas Dennis venture has ended and Henlys is no more. Volvo owns NovaBUS and Prévost outright and has a major stake in Blue Bird. NABI has sold Optare to its management and the Wright Group's relationship with Chance continues on a supplier/customer basis with US manufacturer Optima Bus (previously known as Chance).

What is the great attraction?

So what is the attraction of the US? After all, the market is fiercely protectionist, with a Buy America policy mandating that federal funding is only available for transit buses built with at least 60% of their parts sourced in the US. The answers are that there are far more buses in the US than the UK, federal support for public transport is far higher and US manufacturers have proved sluggish and uninspiring in responding to the market's needs.

Broadly, US operators buy over 6,000 new buses every year. Federal funding usually covers up to 80% of the purchase price and operators also receive generous government subsidies for all sorts of projects. They can also levy a percentage of local sale taxes to support transport, and have access to local, state and

Left: Wrightbus styling is evident on the front of a hybrid electric Optima Opus.

locally generated funding — such as tolls — to contribute towards the operation of buses. Funding arrangements vary from state to state and city to city, but federal support this year will add up to US\$7.7 billion (£4.5 billion). By 2009, this will rise to US\$10.3 billion (£6.1 billion).

US cities have large fleets that they tend to replace within 10-year cycles, so they order in huge numbers. The top five are MTA New York (4,484 buses), New Jersey Transit (2,982), Metro Los Angeles (2,727), CTA Chicago (2,033) and WAMTA Washington (1,447), but the 100th largest — LTD Eugene, Oregon — boasts 100 buses, most of them full size or articulated.

Subsidies are high. For example, Expo this year was in Dallas, Texas where Dart operates 752 buses, and last year received a subsidy per passenger on all modes of US\$2.61, and on local rail a staggering US\$3.72 per passenger journey. Support in other urban areas is even higher.

This support does not all disappear down a black hole. This year, as oil prices rose, President Bush exhorted the nation to make more use of public transport in the national interest. Figures delivered by APTA president William Millar show that bus ridership in 2004 was up 2.1%, while car use increased by only 1.1%. Reports from many parts of the US show that ridership has risen significantly in the past three months, with authorities such as Washington DC Metro showing a 4% increase in August. Miami Dade — which operates NABI 30-LFNs — shows a 25.6% increase over the past three years. But the highest figures offered were from Nashville MTA, which saw increases of 23% in one year following the introduction of 76 new buses and 49 vans.

US operators are also way ahead of us in the use of alternative fuels. Specific federal funding is also available for new projects such as those using fuel-cell propulsion. Over 6,000 buses are powered by compressed natural gas, over 1,000 have liquefied natural gas engines and over 1,000 have hybrid electric propulsion, which is an area that is set to grow fast. Add to that the punitive emission limits that come into force in 2007 and 2010, and you get a technology mix that is as challenging as it is exciting.

Dart first, double-decker later

The arrival of the Dart-derived SLF200 six years ago showed that a lighter weight short bus with design flair could be popular in the US. However, the under-35ft market amounts to little more than 1,000 units per year, and DaimlerChrysler is now completing the last examples of the SLF232 and SLF235. It is concentrating on its Orion V (high-floor) and Orion VII (low-floor, also available with alternative power options), which to my eyes are uglier than a cardboard box.

The Orion case shows what builders need to do to comply with the Buy America policy. Orion, NovaBUS, MCI and New Flyer all build buses in Canada, then take them over the border to assemble them in the US. NABI imports shells from Hungary for US assembly. Exceptions can be made when no comparable product exists — as has been the case with the



Above: Uglier than a cardboard box? An Orion VII.



Above: One of the Van Hool A330 fuel-cell buses for AC Transit.

Right: Thinking outside the shoebox. A NABI BRT bus for the Los Angeles rapid transit system.



Alexander Dennis Enviro500, the tram-like Irisbus Cavis and, for a time, the composite-bodied NABI CompoBus. The Solo-derived NABI 30-LFN has sold reasonably well to the private sector, but does not have a transit market future unless it is assembled in the US.

No matter how much design flair and innovation that UK manufacturers may show, they have to meet the Buy America policy, the federal Altoona tests and — worst of all — a 'not invented here' philosophy that dogs the market. Thus it's pleasing to report that Alexander Dennis has broken into the US

market with its tri-axle Enviro500 double-decker. It has attracted 45 serious enquiries, and requests from 15 US cities for demonstration stints during the next 12 months. Significantly, virtually all the serious inquiries came from operators of 60ft articulated buses, which have fewer seats than a 40ft double-decker. It exhibited an 81-seater, one of 50 purchased by Citizens Area Transit (CAT) of Las Vegas,

Nevada, and ran another on demonstration runs around Dallas.

The double-decker has just completed the US Altoona test, a demonstrator being tested to destruction over 15,000 miles. It was given a 12-year lifecycle or 500,000 miles certificate, which enables purchasers to apply for an 80% federal grant estimated in this case to be between £250,000 and £300,000 per bus. The test involved running nearly half the mileage at gross vehicle weight of 54,670lb over a shakedown track of obstacles designed to punish components and twist and strain the chassis and body. In addition to the Altoona test, the bus successfully completed a Vegas cool-down test, which is tougher than the national standard, where the body was baked to 140degF and then allowed only half an hour to cool down to 70degF.

The 'not invented here' attitude was exemplified by a complete blackout in trade magazines and news media in Dallas. But the breakthrough in Vegas is the first US order for local bus (as opposed to tourist) service and will give the Enviro500 a high-profile national showcase by operating in demanding conditions.

Alexander Dennis almost achieved the 60% content requirement by using US components during assembly in Falkirk, but it is now looking for a US partner to undertake vehicle assembly, and will investigate the addition of a hybrid-drive option.

Van Hool breaks into California

The other notable European breakthrough comes from Belgian manufacturer Van Hool. It stole the 2002 show with the announcement that AC Transit (Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District) of Oakland, California had purchased 191 buses, which were not eligible for federal funding — 134 A330 40ft rigids and 57 AG300 60ft artic. It has followed that with a further order for 89 — 61 A300K 30ft midibuses (of which 10 will be petrol hybrids), 25 AG300 artic and three A330 40ft hybrid electric fuel-cell buses. Two fuel-cell buses were at the show, one of them running trips around Dallas.

AC Transit compensated for the loss of federal money by using advertising, road toll and farebox income to equip itself with a flat floor bus, which it says is of a higher quality than US-built buses. The fuel cell buses, together with a fourth for SunLine Transit of Palm Springs, California, enter service in November as part of a project, part-funded by 25 partners including federal and state governments, and matched by the bus companies themselves. The project will include the installation of specialised fuelling and maintenance facilities.

Low floors are not universal

Lest we run away with the idea that low floors are the universal answer in the US, it's worth noting that many American cities do not use them. That is either because of road constraints or the heavy winter snowfalls in areas where road clearing is not as good as it should be.

Virtually all buses have wheelchair lifts, often at the entrance as in the new Caetano Levante coach for National Express in the UK, to meet the needs of thousands of disabled Vietnam



Sleek styling grafted on to the front of a New Flyer low-floor BRT bus.



The new 30ft low-floor model from Gillig, one of the most consistently successful US-based manufacturers.

Right: Millennium Transit's new low-floor version of the late-1970s RTS, with deeper side windows in the front section.



War veterans. So-called 'paratransit' services are provided by bespoke van-based buses, plenty of new examples of which were on show in Dallas, mostly from smaller manufacturers.

Styling is another concept just starting to emerge, and New Flyer, Blue Bird, Gillig and NABI all showed new models that were trying to escape the boxy image. NABI's new BRT (bus rapid transit) artic was advertised as 'thinking outside the shoebox'.

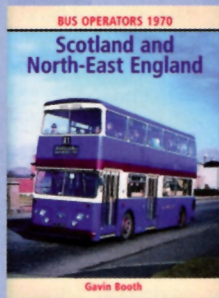
Despite a plethora of new products, the major manufacturers have consolidated their ranges. Volvo-owned NovaBUS produced its large LFN, but leaves the smaller sector to Blue Bird, and MCI is reworking its old-fashioned D4500 commuter coaches. DaimlerChrysler has narrowed its range, and the Thor group is integrating its 'lightweight' Champion and El Dorado products. Surprisingly, Gillig brought out

a 30ft bus and displayed its hybrids, but the traditional Gillig Phantom (although not present) continues to sell well. Millennium Transit also showed that resurrecting the age-old RTS — built successively by General Motors, MCI and NovaBUS before the latter sold its Roswell, New Mexico plant — could be a good idea with initial orders for nearly 300, including a low-floor version.

Significant absences were headed by Neoplan USA, which might end up as the next casualty of a market in which many manufacturers have been and gone. Nor were any sardine-can yellow schoolbuses on show, but their presence would have lowered the tone of an extremely innovative exhibition.

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Gallumphing round Wessex in an Arrow

With a few recent bus rides to inspire him, **JULIAN OSBORNE** reflects on how much the industry has done to improve customer care in the 10 years he has been writing this column

Not only were the buses listed in October Service Extra on time, but most were well presented, modern and comfortable vehicles with good legroom. A few were more in keeping with public misperceptions. The Shamrock MetroRider out of Pontypridd had seen better days. Solent Blue Line's Olympian to Southampton looked rougher than any of the superannuated First Olympians used the same day (even if one of those had a lopsided headlamp).

But the booby prize in those travels does go to First. On 19 May, I had the misfortune to twice find myself gallumphing around the lanes of Wiltshire and Somerset on cascaded London Dennis Arrow 31932. Some structural adjustment to these double-deckers (to reduce their tendency to sway, I believe) has left at least this one with the ride qualities of the Bristol K. The fact that the others were all fine is encouraging. Out of 31 buses, three were not so good, 29 were okay — and 10 were low-floor.

It is 10 years since I started writing about this sort of stuff, so I'm looking to be encouraged. When I look back at what we were talking about then, I find mostly the same themes as now, though. This is probably not as dispiriting as it might appear, as customer service issues are always the same and the investment — especially the emotional investment — needs constant renewing.

And I think we have moved up a notch or two in that time. Vehicles are better, there are areas where image has improved greatly and

marketing and publicity has kept pace with technical innovation. Ten years ago, I couldn't sit at my computer and plan trips locally, let alone elsewhere. Ticket flexibility is also better in most places.

But still much needs to be done and there remain elements of supply side thinking all over the industry. This is shown most clearly when things go wrong: many operators are still not very good at keeping passengers informed about delays and cancellations. Often, if one approaches people in a supervisory role, they'll tell you that there's been an accident up the road or snow has blocked Carter Bar, but venturing this information to puzzled queues — or stranded passengers phoning in — still doesn't come easily.

And seamless customer service still falters in too many operations. I have seen airline pilots who do cabin walkabouts telling the passengers that the marketing department has no idea how to run an airline, but not with the same frequency that one meets bus drivers prepared to do similar.

The media still won't catch the bus

The amount of internal squabbling one meets in some companies is surprising and usually, I find, these are the ones that have the big customer service issues. Moreover, bus companies say they are keen to listen to customers, but have few structures in place where they can do this in a systematic way. Also they often seem keener to explain why

they are doing things (supply side thinking again) than listen to why these things are not popular.

And the industry is still not terribly good at handling the media. Subtle (and not-so-subtle) bias against public transport, and especially buses, is still everywhere. This impacts on attracting new customers as well as making existing ones think again. Impressionable souls don't like to be constantly portrayed as losers.

In a well-intentioned television report that contrasted public transport in Bristol (bad) with Brighton (good), the Bristol reporter introduced us to a woman who 'drives her car', a man who 'uses the train' and another woman who 'doesn't drive so has to make do with the bus' (my italics).

The inflammatory negative reporting of congestion charging that we get around London needs to be heard to be believed. When Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy announced that he wanted to look at a public transport success story when in Brighton for his party's conference, the media reported it as 'Kennedy takes a bus' and nothing else.

And how much mainstream coverage did you see of the Bus Users UK convoy of buses that lobbied the Labour Party conference in Blackpool three years ago? Google it now and the only reference is on an enthusiast website.

A positive story

But things are better than 10 years ago, so let's end on a positive story that illustrates once again that the little things are key to the bigger picture and good customer service often reaches beyond the immediate beneficiaries.

I boarded a very crowded Trident of London United on the evening of 4 July. I wasn't going far, but I thought I could end up getting soaked by imminent rain if I walked. I wasn't certain where my stop was and, among the press of standees, was alarmed to see it looming faster than I'd imagined.

I got to a bell, but it was a late one. The driver stopped. I was most grateful. The next stop was some way farther on and it would indeed have been raining when we got to it. I thanked the driver twice — from inside and outside — and he returned the gesture. I also heard people inside the bus comment on how good it was of him to stop, so he had left lots of his passengers feeling good about bus customer service. The bus was TA243 heading south out of Richmond on the 65 at about 19.00.

Below: Brighton & Hove came off well in a television report that Julian Osborne mentions this month. One of last year's delivery of East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekkas, 622 (YN04 GJJ) C. B. Cochran, passes through Churchill Square in central Brighton. **RUSSELL YOUNG**



Did I use your Queen Mary pictures?

My 2004 book about Southdown's 'Queen Mary' PD3s was financed privately. Rather than a publisher doing the sums and bearing all of the financial risk, several interested people put in money and took a fraction of the risk. This meant that, once printing and publishing services had been paid for, we needed to repay the investors out of revenue.

As we did, we liaised with most of the photographers whose pictures appear and agreed appropriate recompense; many, aware of the way the book was financed, kindly allowed us free use of their pictures. There are one or two whom we haven't been able to contact. If you are one of those, please contact me either via the editor or direct to worphlodge@boltblue.com Many thanks.



Cornwall produces a guide it can view with pride

PHILIP MOUNTFORD heaps praise on an all-operator book that helped him take advantage of a growing bus network

I live in a village in rural Cambridgeshire. There is an adequate bus service run by an old established independent, but in this growing county where bus patronage is increasing, there is no comprehensive timetable.

Stagecoach produces useful leaflets and the county council has issued others, but details of some services are hard to obtain. Local people know their bus times, but a visitor to the area could not easily plan the kind of holidays I have enjoyed recently in North Wales, the Lake District and latterly in Cornwall.

I choose my holiday venues in areas where I can easily obtain booklet timetables — preferably single volumes — to study beforehand to plan routes, and to carry with me to make extensions and adjustments. The All Cornwall Public Transport Guide meets those requirements perfectly, and in half a century of acquiring bus timetables, I believe this is one of the best.

Cornwall has always been difficult bus operating territory. In the 1970s, substantial cutbacks were made. First, successor to the old Western and Southern National, has withdrawn from some areas to concentrate on others, but thanks to the support of the county council and the growth of two excellent independents — Truronian and Western Greyhound — Cornwall probably now has a better bus service than ever before.

All modes of public transport

County transport maps and the well-printed A4-size single-volume timetable are easily obtainable from the numerous tourist information offices and bus stations. The book covers not only bus services in the whole of Cornwall and cross-border services to/from Devon, but also details of ferries and flights as well as information about branch line rail routes.

Supplementary timetables showing service changes were easily obtainable at Truro bus station and when some later alterations were made after Easter, an extra supplement was produced. Bus stop information is generous and the drivers were, with out exception, extremely helpful.

Most bus travellers holidaying in Cornwall arrive by train. There is good liaison between rail and bus operators at places like Bodmin Parkway, where through ticketing is well publicised, and at St Austell where the bus station adjoins the rail station.

I started at Bodmin Parkway, still known nostalgically to some as Bodmin Road, a peaceful spot, travelling on the regular headway Western Greyhound 555 to Padstow on the Camel Estuary. This is the former terminus of the Southern Railway's Atlantic Coast Express, so beloved by the late Sir John Betjeman, whose grave in St Enodoc Churchyard is only a few miles away.

I got off at Wadebridge, a typically Cornish market town, where I stayed at an old inn in the pedestrianised main street. There is a small bus station at Wadebridge, but most passengers use the stop at The Platt in the town centre. The same

stop serves all routes. Wadebridge is a useful hub for services north to Tintagel, Boscastle (now happily recovering from the flooding ordeal of August last year) and Bude, east to Camelford and Launceston, west to Padstow and south to St Columb Major — itself an important interchange — and Truro. The Western Greyhound trunk 594, serving the spine of Cornwall, provides an excellent and regular link between the thinly populated north of the county and the busier south and west.

Rover tickets from each operator

Western Greyhound offers a £5 day rover ticket for its own services; Truronian and First have similar explorer-type facilities. First's is more expensive but covers a much larger area. Three

days' travel cost me only £17 — embracing Bude, Launceston, Liskeard, St Austell, Truro, Newquay, Padstow and Polzeath, the last of these including a delightful four-mile coastal walk. I did not have time to fit in The Lost Gardens of Heligan or The Eden Project, but both of these major attractions are well advertised by bus operators.

The All Cornwall timetable book is arranged according to operators. First's services, strongest in west Cornwall, are printed in Barbie colours, Truronian's in south Cornwall are black and red, and Western Greyhound's routes, principally in north and mid-Cornwall in black and green. Numerous other operators are included.

First also produces some of its own booklets. Western Greyhound sent me a set of photocopied leaflets for its summer services. Truronian at the time (last April) did not have any individual leaflets except for The Eden Project route. But everything was in the twice-yearly book, the summer issue of which had 144 pages including a diagrammatic map of Truronian routes and a traditional map of Western Greyhound services with colour-coded routes. There also are numerous street plans in the usual FWT style.

We want to hear from readers, operators and transport authorities about how the industry is tackling the challenge of imparting accessible information to the travelling public — whether in timetables, leaflets or maps, at bus stops, bus stations or on the Internet. If you find items of interest (we want to hear about the good just as much as about the bad) and could write about 600 words on the subject, accompanied by photographs and/or publicity material, please contact the Editor at the Glasgow address shown on p2 or send an e-mail to buseditor@btconnect.com





PMP Transport Films

'Dave & Mandy wish all their customers a very merry Christmas, lots of new releases, all films on this page available in either DVD or video. The perfect present for the transport enthusiast, all you need to quote is the programme number! Hundreds more listed on our web site.'



1264. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Ayrshire visiting Kilmarnock, Irvine and Ardrossan all in good spring weather - plenty of activity especially Kilmarnock.

1265. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Motherwell, Hamilton, Airdrie at Easter plus a look back at the GVVTT open day and running day the previous autumn.

1266. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Greenock, starts quite sunny much improved bus standards, Paisley late afternoon also Rhu and Garelochhead.

1267. Scotland. UK. Buses. March 2005. Glasgow. Easter Saturday morning visit with the First fleet much upgraded although still a great deal of variety.

1268. Cobham. UK. Buses. April 2005. The annual Cobham rally at Wisley airfield in Surrey. The arrivals, mostly in glorious sunshine, a memorable day out.

1269. Milton Keynes. UK. Buses. April 2005. A customer suggestion and we are really glad we called by, superb weather, friendly crews, lots of vehicles.

1271. Bus Spot Gateshead. UK. Buses. Starts with cine with real sound taken 1983 in NBC era then forward to the Garden Festival and visits up to 2002.

1274. Bus Spot Newcastle. UK. Buses Trolleys. Starts in trolleybus era then through pre PTE era diesel buses, PTE then deregulation right up to 2002.

1275. Chatham. UK. Buses. April 2005. Arriva revamped its Medway services back in 2004 with a big influx of new stock, friendly and busy at bus station.

1276. Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells. UK. Buses. April 2005. Plenty of vehicle variety and Tunbridge Wells provides relief from Arriva on this spring Saturday.

1277. Merseyside. UK. Buses. March/April 2005. Starts in March 2005 at St Helens then a sunny spring weekday in Liverpool and similar in Birkenhead in April.

1278. Newcastle and Gateshead. Saturday 30th April 2005. UK. Buses. Newcastle including the bus station and the refurbished Gateshead bus station.

1279. South Shields and Sunderland. Saturday 30th April 2005. UK. Buses. South Shields town centre and then Sunderland bus station area, full of action.

1280. Edinburgh and Livingston. May 2005. Scotland / UK. Buses. Both Lothian and First fleets have had an influx of new deliveries, very friendly and sunny.

1281. Lancashire. Burnley, Blackburn, Rawtenstall. UK. Buses. 2005. Mid week visits to all three between February and May, good sunny weather each time.

1282. North Wales. UK. Buses. February - May 2005. Bangor, Caernarfon and Wrexham. Wrexham with its independents plus sunny Bangor and Caernarfon.

1288. Naples. Italy. May 2005. Trams, Trolleybuses and Buses. New fears visiting this most friendly of Italian cities, 2 trolley systems, new trams and trolleys.

1289. A Decade In Swansea. South Wales. UK. Buses. Drawn from the PMP archive, buses in Swansea between 1994 and 2004 with material by Tim Bubb.

1290. Bus Spot Blackwood. South Wales. Buses. Archives with cine film of the valleys through to video coverage from the 1990s and 21st century. DVD ONLY.

1291. Essex. UK. Buses. June 2005. We start our tour on a Friday morning in sunny Southend, lots of changing next in Chelmsford and then amazing Colchester

1292. Norwich & Gt Yarmouth. UK. Buses. June 2005. Saturday morning bus services, loads of brand new buses around, full of interest plus Gt Yarmouth.

1293. South Wales. UK. Buses. June 2005. Visits to Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd - rebuilt bus station, Bridgend - rebuilt bus station, Neath - new bus station.

1294. Swansea. UK. Buses. June 2005. Saturday afternoon, busy bus station, some city centre plus short section on the Transport Festival the next morning.

1295. Blackpool. UK. Trams. June 2005. Clear blue sky awaits us in Blackpool with a fine selection from the diminishing tram fleet with many South Shore shots.

1296. Cheshire. UK. Buses. Feb-June 2005. Two visits to Chester in Winter and Summer then clear blue sky in Warrington and another scorcher at Crewe.

1297. Northern Ireland. UK. Buses. July 2005. Mainly depot visits with calls including Newry, Newcastle, Downpatrick, Newtownards, Bangor plus more.

1298. Ulster. Northern Ireland, UK & Ireland. Buses. July 2005. Ballymena, Coleraine, Derry, Letterkenny, Strabane, Omagh, Enniskillen mainly depots.



1299. Ireland. Buses. July 2005. We start at Sligo then down to Galway next comes Limerick, Tralee then Cork, all buses in action rather than depots.

1300. Northamptonshire. UK. Buses. July 2005. A much requested return to Northampton with new buses galore then on to Kettering and Corby.

1301. Best Ever Southdown. UK. Buses. John Bishops well known films all on one DVD from early 1960s through to deregulation in 1986, best loved operator.

1302. Yorkshire Coast. July 2005. UK. Buses. Dave Spencer visits Kingston Upon Hull, temp bus terminus, new deckers, then Bridlington and Scarborough.

1303. Lathalmond - The First Ten Years. UK. Buses. A celebration of the Scottish National Bus Museum's first 10 years at Lathalmond. Scenes 1997-2004.

1304. Bus Spot Ayrshire Coast. UK. Buses. Usual format covers from Ayr, Saltcoats, Cumbrae, etc includes A1, AA etc 1960s, 70s, 80s through to 2005.

1305. Bus Spot Glasgow. UK. Buses. Again usual format, many scenes from 1960s to 2005 with superb cine era contributions and video from the 1980s.

1306. Brighton & Worthing. UK. Buses. 2004-5. Sequences by Dave Spencer and John Bishop includes the B&H Routemaster operation and change of livery.

1311. Bus Spot Gosport & Fareham. The usual format starts in the 1970s NBC era then a depot visit in 1990 plus action scenes through 90s into 21st century.

1312. Fife & Lathalmond. UK. Buses. Scotland. August 2005. Visits to Glenrothes, Kirkcaldy,

Dunfermline and the open weekend at Lathalmond museum.

1313. East Kent. UK Buses. August 2005. We start at Canterbury with plenty of activity incl commemorative liveries, then on to Dover ends at Folkestone.

1321. Showbus. UK. Buses. September 2005. Cambridgeshire. The annual celebration of buses with nearly 500 entrants, all from a new vantage point.

1322. Showbus. UK. Buses. September 2005. Cambridgeshire. We continue coverage of the busiest entry period leaving off just before final stragglers.

1323. Greater Manchester. UK. Buses. August / September 2005. Visits to Bolton (Arriva first weekday of Blue Bus), Manchester and Bury for Scania Artics.

1324. London. UK. Buses. September 2005. Trafalgar Square and Victoria, sunny weather, lots of Routemasters on all of the last three normal service routes.

1325. London. UK. Buses. September 2005.

Haymarket, Marble Arch, Elephant & Castle, Oxford St, continues on from previous volume, more RMs in service.

1326. Cambridge. UK. Buses. September 2005. The annual bash at Cambridge prior to Showbus, Cavalier, Burtons, Whippets plus of course Stagecoach.

1327. Leicester. UK. Buses. October 2005. Much requested update on the bus scene, which has seen considerable modernisation, quite a bright autumn day.

1328. Roll on Switzerland. Trolleybuses / Trams / Light Rail. 1960s-80s. A whole range of operators drawn from throughout the PMP archive with sound added.

1329. Deregulation around London. UK. Buses. By Tim Bubb, early video coverage including Stevenage, Thurrock, Bexleyheath, Romford, Slough and London.

1330. Hertfordshire. UK. Buses. 2005. Summer scenes at Hemel Hempstead and then a sunny autumn day in Stevenage, wow what a mixture of liveries there.

1331. Bedfordshire. UK. Buses. First a look back at Bedford in the RM era at Deregulation then forward to Oct 2005 plus Luton also in October 2005.

1332. Colchester. Bus Spot. UK. Buses. Cine era includes municipal, great scenes courtesy Tim Bubb around deregulation, many indpts through to Burtons.

1333. Deregulation in South Wales. UK. Buses. Early video in an all new compilation to celebrate 20 years since deregulation, obvious locations plus some new.



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Above: First Devon & Cornwall 32758 (WA05 OLT) *Egret*, one of five East Lancs Mylennium Lolyne-bodied Alexander Dennis Tridents in Tamar Link livery, arriving at Torpoint, Cornwall on the ferry from Plymouth. The naval facilities of Devonport dominate the immediate background. **MARK BAILEY**

Western Greyhound's open-top AEC/Park Royal Routemaster, 1783 (783 DYE), at Pentire Head, Newquay in August. It was in the Bath Bus Company fleet from 1997 until last year and before that was owned by London Coaches. **KEVIN SMITH**





Above: As part of this year's 125th anniversary of Royal Blue, preserved ECW-bodied Bristol RELH6G coach 1460 (OTA 632G) of Western National heads north from Hayle with St Ives Bay in the background. **DWR PICTURE LIBRARY**



Probably the only one of its kind in the FirstGroup fleet, First Devon & Cornwall 54090 (WJ02 HYW) is a Devon County Council-owned LDV with 16-seat Trucksmithe body. It was photographed at Petrockstowe on a Fridays-only service from Barnstaple. **DWR PICTURE LIBRARY**

To BUSES, PO Box 3759, Glasgow G41 5YN or Fax 0141 427 9594 or
e-mail buseseditor@btconnect.com (Please quote full postal address if communicating by e-mail)

PTEs: we are backing buses and franchising

I'm writing to correct the impression of PTE bus policy given by your October editorial and to assure your readers that PTEs are continuing to work in partnership with bus operators to deliver substantial improvements for bus passengers. Indeed, we are one of the country's biggest backers of the bus with levels of investment in PTE areas far higher, per head, than they are in the rest of England (excluding London).

We are backing the bus by:

- Systematically upgrading bus stations to the very highest standards.
- Maintaining and renewing tens of thousands of stops and shelters.
- Providing impartial information (from bus timetables to real time information by phone).
- Promoting bus services as part of wider integrated public transport networks.
- Running concessionary fares and multi-modal ticketing schemes.
- Supporting non-commercial services.
- And pioneering innovations like guided bus, yellow bus and demand responsive services.

Your editorial criticised PTEs for not focusing on park-&-ride. We have extensive rail and light rail park-&-ride facilities and although rail park-&-ride is often the most sensible option in Britain's largest conurbations, we also have bus based park-&-ride facilities in PTE areas, including in Coventry, Southport and Leeds.

Despite all these efforts, bus use continues to fall in our areas and service quality remains unacceptably patchy. We are therefore bringing forward plans to introduce the franchising of bus services in PTE areas. A similar system of franchising is already the norm on Britain's rail network, on London's buses, and on public transport throughout mainland Europe.

The suggestion in your editorial that franchising of bus services will automatically trigger London-style costs is misleading. The cost of a franchise depends on what is specified. For example, before the election of Mayor Livingstone, ridership in London was rising and costs were falling. We believe that franchising offers the opportunity to get far better value for money for the taxpayer than the current arrangements.

Franchising provides a true public-private partnership and we look forward to engaging with the industry, with government and with the trade press on its implementation, as our plans unfold over the coming year. In the meantime, I can guarantee to your readers that we will continue to back the bus by investing in further significant improvements to bus provision.

Rob Donald
director general, Centro
chair, PTE Group

Where is the PTEs' evidence?

In your editorial comments on the lobbying by the PTEs for control of bus services (*Buses* October), you rightly highlight the potential costs, the present lack of action to assist the development of bus services and, in particular, the failure to match the development of commercial park-&-ride services in other non-PTE areas.

The PTEs claim they would provide a better service for no significant increase in costs. I (and, I am sure, many others) wonder where is the evidence to support this.

Your coverage of the first 25 years of Stagecoach in the same issue illustrates vividly the benefits that have flowed from a truly entrepreneurial approach. Yes, it made mistakes, as Brian Souter freely admits, but then he who made no mistakes never made anything. Stagecoach can point to significant passenger growth in large parts of its network, something being achieved without massive subsidies. How many of the PTEs achieved the same?

It is not just the large groups who are working to improve standards. The achievements of Trent Barton are well known and, here in Lanarkshire, several independents, notably, Hutchison's, Irvine, McKindless and Whitelaw are proving their market awareness with services often at better frequency than before deregulation.

You, dear editor, and I had experience of Strathclyde PTE control of bus services which, frankly, does not encourage me to accept that they would 'provide a better service' and certainly not one 'at no significant increase in costs'. You may recall that the 1984 Buses White Paper highlighted Strathclyde PTE as a 'high subsidy/high fare authority' (paragraph 7.4).

They argue that they would provide 'a more efficient planned system in which passenger needs would determine everything'. Let me give you one example of the way this operated in 'the good old days'. As a result of route licensing controls, the out-of-town services operated by the Scottish Bus Group were forced out on to the perimeter of the centre of Glasgow, leaving the passengers to walk the last half mile or mile to their ultimate destination.

Proposals were developed under Scotmap to improve this by re-routing services closer to the passengers' destinations. These were fiercely opposed by the PTE on the grounds that 'the passengers could change to a PTE bus to complete their journey'. So much for passengers' needs determining everything.

In the same context, I can't help wondering if those passengers now forced to change from bus to tram to complete their journey to central Croydon agree that their needs determined everything in a planned system.

One aspect of Nicholas Ridley's legacy to the bus industry deserves mention. He resolved the dichotomy between running a business and providing a social service that bedeviled transport management, especially in the public

sector, over many years. Now the social service responsibility lies squarely with the political authorities, where it belongs, and bus managers are free to run their business.

In particular, bus companies are no longer expected to exploit the passengers on good routes to cross subsidise 'socially necessary' services. Those who decry the loss of such cross subsidy seem to forget that the 'good' routes are often most patronised by the less affluent members of society.

The present system may not be perfect but it is the best we have. Putting the clock back to give politicians and bureaucrats control over day-to-day management of bus services would be a retrograde step.

John Whittle
Yieldshields, Carlisle

Unfair to Tyne & Wear PTE

In the recent edition of *Buses Focus* featuring the Go-Ahead Group, I was surprised to see the somewhat disparaging remarks from the chief executive, Chris Moyes, concerning efforts by the Tyne & Wear PTE (as Nexus was then still known) in the mid-1980s to encourage use of the newly completed Metro.

Here was a new and up-to-date light rail system with all its acknowledged advantages that had been provided at huge cost to the public purse and it was quite reasonably thought that it should be given every opportunity to reduce urban congestion and pollution. Had the system been handed over to a private operator to run as is more common today, and had that operator perhaps been Go-Ahead, then would Mr Moyes's opinion have been different?

The final quotation in that same paragraph says: 'A centrally-planned network is never as good as one that is based on what people do'. Well, Mr Moyes, on my most recent trip to the North East, on a Sunday, I as a light rail enthusiast first and bus enthusiast second, found it gratifying to see the Metro running full of satisfied families coming and going, to visit relatives maybe, or shopping, while outside the few buses around were struggling manfully to carry pitiful loads.

In view of the hard time Go-North East is apparently having according to *Buses Focus* farther on, perhaps Chris Moyes should talk to Nexus about a franchise deal.

Howard J. Piltz CMILT
Wilmslow, Cheshire

An opportunity for trolleybuses?

Further to your editorial regarding the PTEs' stated desire to re-regulate bus services and the government's strong opposition to any such thing, here is a thought. Given the main objections to reintroducing trolleybuses to our streets are cost and competition, why do the PTEs not offer the government a compromise whereby they, the PTEs, own, operate and regulate quality trolleybus services on specified urban and interurban routes?

Initially, the cost of installing overhead and other essential infrastructure could be via public private investments (the government's favourite plaything), while the actual vehicles could,

primarily, be converted motorbuses. I'm thinking here of the Alexander Dennis Trident or Dart or the Optare Tempo. This type of conversion is widely accepted as feasible and cost-effective, as proven in many countries where there is no economic alternative.

Otherwise — and this would please those who wish to see an end to manufacturing in the UK — Solaris, Van Hool, MAN, Volvo, Skoda or Hess trolleybuses could be imported — Solaris being the best value, as Rome will testify.

The fleets themselves could either be privately owned, like Stagecoach does in New Zealand, or local authority-owned, using the Muni model in San Francisco. The electricity to fuel the vehicles could be purchased from major suppliers or generated by local authority-owned power stations.

Further, why not forever demolish the light rail transit theory by using abandoned railway trackbed for the creation of trolleybusways. Cambridge could do it tomorrow simply by altering its vehicle specification. This would also quell the strident howls of 'trolleybuses get stuck in the same traffic as ordinary buses', 'trolleybuses cannot get round obstructions' (show me a tram that can) and so forth. What the detractors do not mention is that when a trolleybus is stuck in traffic, it does not use fuel, emit fumes or noise. Nor does it vibrate — bus bodybuilders please take note.

We need not go to the expense of making high-powered trolleybuses for ex-railways work as there are no significant gradients or sharp corners to contend with. We could even employ 1930s technology by using low-maintenance, rugged, reliable contactor/resistor method of control. A 90kW traction motor would suffice, too.

Perhaps someone that the PTEs or central government actually listens to could put forward the idea. The response I get is almost invariably from some faceless minion sitting in an air conditioned windowless office, telling me that it will not fly because its eyes are too close together.

With new tram schemes all but dead in the water, mainly because they are a financial black hole, does not the trolleybus offer the best, most cost-effective, sustainable solution? A growing number of transport professionals thinks so. The disadvantage of trolleybus systems being recommended by consultancy companies is that they are too simple and too cheap.

John Benton
Moxley, W Midlands

Deregulation is 'crazy' situation

I certainly agree with Andrew Braddock (Inside Track last month) that the standard of British bus services is way behind much of the rest of Western Europe. But this 'crazy' situation is the result of bus deregulation, which Andrew wants to retain.

Britain is unique in the developed world in assuming that on-the-road competition will result in excellent bus services. What has in fact resulted is bus operators who concentrate on main road routes 07.00 to 19.00 Mondays to Saturdays.

Deregulation is the antithesis of integration. Andrew (along with many others) complains of the role of the Office of Fair Trading in

preventing integration. But that role is an essential part of the legal package laid down in the 1985 Transport Act. For the past 19 years, bus operation has been like any other service industry. Bus operators (like hairdressers) have the freedom to compete for the available market, but must not form cartels.

Andrew advocates pouring public money into buses. Actually, a lot of public money already goes to help bus operators, with local authorities providing bus lanes, bus shelters and (in some areas) excellent and comprehensive publicity. But operators are not accountable to local authorities. In particular, local authorities can provide excellent infrastructure, but cannot guarantee that that infrastructure will be used to the best effect.

We must also consider the effects of pensioners' concessions. These are meant to be a form of social welfare provision, but in reality are also a huge subsidy to democratically unaccountable bus operators. Furthermore, these concessions lead to operators concentrating their efforts on the middle hours of weekdays, even though those in employment (or studying) want bus services that run seven-days-a-week and at least 18 (if not 24) hours a day.

Dr Roger Sexton
Nottingham Trent University

Nothing new about hypothecation

Andrew Braddock (Inside Track last month) should know that the Treasury's opposition to hypothecation goes back a long way. According to Roy Jenkins (*Churchill* 2001) in a departmental memorandum preparatory to his 1926 budget, Winston S. Churchill, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said: 'Such contentions [hypothecation] are absurd and constitute at once an outrage upon the sovereignty of parliament and upon commonsense'. He then proceeded to 'raid' the road fund in his budget and did so again the following year. This effectively gave control of all taxation to the Treasury and so John Prescott's attempt at hypothecation was always destined to failure as it challenged that power of the Treasury.

David Greenwood
Peyia, Cyprus

Spinning the London fares rise

In London last month states that 'bus fares in London will rise by an average of 10% in January, with the cash fare rising to £1.50'. That's a 30p rise from £1.20, which when I went to school would have been 25%. The other ticket I buy is the One-Day Bus Pass, which I believe goes from £3 to £3.50 (16.67%) and was only £2 a year or two back. So where does the spun 10% come from? Or does part of the spin allow for the reduction to zero of child fares, except children visiting London who presumably have to pay adult fares?

John Scotford
Chippenharn

Rty hadrer netx mite

We're none of us immune to the dreaded typo, as I'm sure we'll all agree, but it is a bit embarrassing when it's displayed on the front of a bus for all to see. I refer you to the Geoff Amos Olympian on p50, *Buses* November, which is bound for 'Davenry'. Oops . . .

Colin Jack
Weymouth

Wheelchair accessible coaches



I have read with great interest the many comments in your You Write column about accessible vehicles.

While the majority of single-deck buses available today have straightforward procedures for admitting wheelchairs, I was astonished at the crude and Heath Robinson contraption that has been incorporated in the new First Cymru Volvo B7Rs that have recently been introduced on services between Swansea and Cardiff.

I attach a picture (above) of the sign that has been stuck on to the foot well of one of these coaches. This on a vehicle less than four weeks' old.

What happens if an unsuspecting wheelchair user arrives at any of the bus stops along the route? Surely there is a simpler and more easily operated system that could be used. What on earth is wrong with the Wrightbus Commuter system? Having seen it on a prototype, it looked very simple and easy to operate.

I understand that Stagecoach has ordered two vehicles from Wrightbus for a tendered service in Dumfries, yet has ordered some Plaxton-bodied Volvos to a similar specification to those of First. Clearly, neither First nor Stagecoach is serious about the ease of using these contraptions. Time for a drastic re-think.

I have travelled on one of the First Volvos, and while the vehicle has a smooth ride, there are no internal stanchions whatsoever, thus making it extremely risky to leave one's seat before the vehicle comes to a stop.

The internal decor is truly awful. It is drab and uninviting. You cannot see forward, as the top of the driver's windscreen is obstructed by the destination gear. The only outward view is through the side windows. The seat behind the entrance — and the position for the wheelchair user — looks like a dentist's chair. Also, it was broken on the vehicle on which I rode. Such is progress indeed.

Anthony R. J. Warrenner
Cardiff

In defence of First Devon & Cornwall

I must comment on Graham Donaldson's letter (You Write, October) concerning First's operations in Devon and Cornwall.

I moved to south-east Cornwall four years ago and commute every day using First services from Torpoint depot. Previously, I lived in the Wigan area and held some middle management positions with one of First's predecessors, GM Buses.

To be fair to First Devon & Cornwall, its operations in Cornwall have improved over the past four years. True, there have been economies and service reductions, but the reality is that bus operation in this area offers little or no reward or profit, certainly during the winter. First has, however, introduced improvements, like upgrading the X80/81 (Plymouth-Torquay) with increased frequency and new links like the X8 (Plymouth-Bude) service. Even to our village, we now have five buses each day compared to the previous three that operated until 2004.

I agree that the vehicle age profile could be reduced, but the reality of economics does not allow for major rolling stock improvements as in areas like London. First does a good job with what it has. And to force First to look at major fleet renewal overnight would, I feel, lead to the demise of many marginal services that could not justify this outlay, regardless of operator, when significant numbers of the present fleet are fit for purpose.

To compare First with Western Greyhound or Truronian is not fair. These companies did not inherit a business in need of significant change, and they were able to start with a clean sheet of paper to plan their route network and acquire buses afresh without any burdens of dealing with vehicles already owned but not necessarily wanted.

It is unfortunate that Mr Donaldson had to wait an hour owing to a bus breakdown in Newquay. I also use Western Greyhound's and other operators' services in this area. They occasionally break down too, and owing to the distances involved and summer traffic congestion, a wait of this kind can be understandable.

One thing that really impresses me about First is the calibre and commitment of its drivers to do the best they can and maintain service often against incredible odds. Some of the roads served are barely wide enough for a bus to fit down. They cope with huge increases in traffic in the summer plus all the sorts of things drivers have to deal with in a holiday area like helping tourists to find their way, and they still keep the service going.

So come on, give First a chance. Yes, there is much room for improvement but it has and still is moving forward even in Devon and Cornwall.

I will be on my regular First bus to Polperro (VR-operated for now, but clean and presentable) and if it runs late I will know that is because either there was a ferry problem at Torpoint or a car was parked blocking the road at Downderry. None of these is the fault of First, but it will come no matter what and the driver will greet me with a smile and 'Hello, sorry I am late tonight'. How many people in other areas can depend on a service like this?

Derek Potts
Polperro

Indifferent to opportunities in Birmingham

Graham Donaldson's gripe about First's geriatric Cornish fleet and Paul Danks's complaint about service cuts in Kidderminster (You Write, October) really do beg the question why First still clings on to rural operations that it obviously has little interest in improving. However, First's seeming inability to develop a market also appears to extend to some conurbations.

For instance, why has First Wyvern allowed its Birmingham-Bromsgrove services to languish, despite the fact that they operate much of their route along the Bristol Road — one of Birmingham's busiest transport arteries?

With daytime frequencies of every 15min, First's service 143/144 should have been providing real competition to Travel West Midlands's own buses along a corridor that includes populous suburbs like Selly Oak, Northfield and Rubery, as well as the main campus of the University of Birmingham.

However, so uninterested has First proved at tapping into this potential market that, bizarrely, it maintains in place a completely separate stopping system within Birmingham so that any local passenger spying a First vehicle approaching has to leg it pretty sharpish to a bus stop 100yd up the road to flag it down. Furthermore, many First drivers seem to manifest an active dislike for short-journeying passengers and will often drive straight past such furiously gesticulating individuals.

Operationally, this might have made sense in the days when Midland Red had more than enough long distance patronage on its hands to justify such restrictive travel arrangements. However, it makes no commercial sense at all when today's First vehicles are often trundling down the Bristol Road with hardly a soul on board — even during busy periods.

Recently, First drastically pruned back its Bristol Road routes, effectively halving their frequency. This has enabled independent operator Birmingham Coach Company (trading locally as Diamond Bus) to seize the initiative

and run a new half-hourly service 64 between Birmingham and Bromsgrove. In stark contrast to First's indifference, Diamond Bus makes sure its buses also call at the busier TWM stopping points so that no opportunity is lost to put bums on seats — however many stops they might be travelling.

Belatedly, First appears to be fighting back, having slightly improved the frequency of service 144, which is now also worked by new Enviro300 single-deckers. However, I suspect that in time First will ultimately abandon its Bristol Road services in the same way it has those along other corridors into Birmingham. What a sad contrast with neighbouring Coventry, where Stagecoach has consistently beefed up its own ex-Midland Red services in order to give TWM a taste of real competition.

Ray Burston
Halesowen

York by the Sea

I suppose that the piece in November Millar's Tales proves that you can tell an enthusiast anything and it will appear in *Buses* two years later.

A local tour guide spotted the Shakespeare picture, so we offered a prize to anybody who spotted the other one. Only three people responded, and one of those was a former Guide Friday tour guide. None of our customers said anything or even suggested that the pictures were out of place. We still have one of those Atlanteans, but it now carries pictures of York recovered from sold Bristol VRs.

Of course, back in York Pullman days, engineering considerations meant that we occasionally ran a York Tour bus in Whitby and the (one and only) Whitby Tour bus in York.

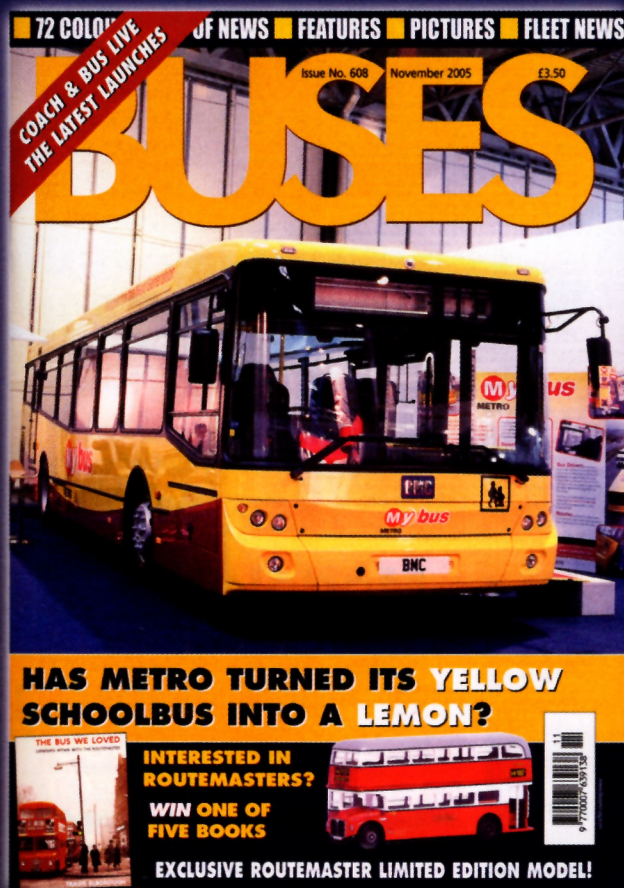
Now that really *did* have people wondering how long the tour was if it took in Whitby as well. No doubt, Geof Dickson will have some suitable photos in his collection . . .

Peter Dew
Top Line Travel, York

Below: The lettering on the side of City Sightseeing ex-Travel West Midlands Scania N113DRB/Alexander H225 LOM advertises 'worldwide open-top sightseeing tours'. Given that it is branded for the South Coast tour but is operating in Cambridge, we could be forgiven for wondering if the tours last much more than an hour. IAN DENT



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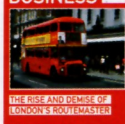
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PRE-HIBERNATION AT WYTHALL MUSEUM



As this year's rally season draws towards its close, the Birmingham & Midland Motor Omnibus Trust held its pre-hibernation running day on 9 October. Participants included Walsall 116 (XDH 516G), one of the erstwhile municipal undertaking's 28ft Daimler Fleetlines with Northern Counties bodies and single-width entrance door.

Picture by TOM BRAUND

TIGER ROARS AT REVIVED WARMINSTER EVENT

The popular Warminster running day, last held in 2003, returned on 23 October. One of the oldest participating vehicles was East Kent JG 9938, a 1937 Park Royal-bodied Leyland Tiger TS8 in the Quantock Heritage fleet.

Picture by RAY PERKINS



RALLY CALENDAR UPDATE

NOVEMBER

26 **Crawley.** Toy and model collectors' fair, K2 Leisure Centre from 10.30.

REVISED DATE AND VENUE

27 **Birmingham.** Aston Manor Transport Museum 9th annual collectors' fair. Free bus service to/from Birmingham centre.

Farnham, Surrey. Toy and model collectors' fair, Maltings from 10.30.

DECEMBER

3/4 **Manchester.** Museum of Transport Christmas Cracker Transport Festival.

10 **Maidstone & Kent Vintage Toy Collectors' Fair,** Lockmeadow Market Hall, Hart Street.
Ipswich Transport Museum Christmas Cracker event.

10/11 **Sandtoft Trolleybus Museum Santa Days.**

11 **Sheffield Bus Museum special open day.**

CANCELLED EVENT

The organisers advise us that the toy and model collectors' fair planned at the Leatherhead Centre, Surrey on 4 December has been cancelled.

If you are planning events in 2006, you won't want to miss out on the Rally Calendar & Museum Guide supplements in March and April *Buses*.

For a free listing, please send details to the editor at the Glasgow address published on p2 or by e-mail to

buseseditor@btconnect.com

to arrive no later than
Friday 13 January.

REPATRIATED ATLANTIAN AT GLASGOW OPEN DAY



One of the latest additions to the collection at the Glasgow Vintage Vehicle Trust's Bridgeton Bus Garage was on display at the GVVV's open day on 9 October. Still in the livery of former owner Don's of Dunmow, Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean JUS 774N was one of 501 similar vehicles new to Greater Glasgow PTE, which numbered it LA927. The GVVV has already announced plans for a similar open day on 8 October next year.

Picture by PHIL HALEWOOD

English and Welsh reports

(no photographs) should be sent to:

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IN FLEET NEWS THIS MONTH

- **Arriva puts Solars into Luton**
- **Burton buys Uno DAF SB220s**
- **Centra renames most of business**
- **Nottingham withdraws last Arrow**
- **Reading looks at Wright StreetCar**

BODY TYPE

AB	Articulated single-deck bus
AC	Articulated coach
B	Rigid single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats in a bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other double-deckers are H (highbridge) regardless of overall height.
M	Minibus
O	Permanent open-top
CO	Convertible open-top
PO	Partial open-top

SEATING CAPACITY

For double-deckers, this is shown with the upper deck capacity first (e.g. 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where the split is not known, a total figure (e.g. 73) is shown in the same style as for single-deckers. The total seating capacity shown includes all fixed and tip-up seats. The vehicles themselves may show other permutations of seats, standing spaces and wheelchair capacity.

DOOR POSITION

F	Front (can be directly behind front axle on vehicles with no front overhang)
R	Rear
RD	Rear with platform doors
C	Centre
D	Dual (two) doors
T	Triple doors

The letter 't' after the door position indicates the provision of a toilet, while 'L' after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

REGISTRATIONS

Registration numbers issued from 1 September 2001 show a two-letter area identification code (e.g. BU for Birmingham, CU for Swansea, SX for Inverness), followed by a two-digit code indicating the period of first registration (e.g. 51 for September 2001 to February 2002, 02 for March to August 2002, 52 for September 2002 to February 2003, 03 for March to August 2003 and so on. These are followed by a three-letter identification of the vehicle itself. In 'Fleet News', a batch of vehicles with consecutively issued registrations will be shown in the following fashion: LS34-46 (GG51 PYS/T/V-Z, PZB-F/H). The letters I and Q are not used in these three-letter combinations.

Where a vehicle has been re-registered, its previous registration number(s) (where known) follow in *italic type* (e.g. RM48 (LDS 199A, *VLT 48*), with the most recent given first.

ACE Travel, Aintree

Ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus G112 FJW is another in stock.

Aintree Coachline, Bootle

Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs RIL 9158 (BFV 222Y) is an addition for the associated **Helms of Eastham** fleet, as are Leyland Fleetline/ECW ULS 658T from Graham, Bentry, Volvo Citybus/Northern Counties G638 BPH from Arriva and Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties N421 JBV from London Central.

Dennis Arrows N402-4 ARA were still in Nottingham, out of service, in October.

Ambassador, Great Yarmouth

Optare Solo MX54 KYB is maroon/white for Elvis — East Link Village Shuttle — services 608/609 (Carlton Colville-Yarmouth) supported by Suffolk County Council and the

Lowestoft Journal. These replaced the axed Eastern Counties James Paget Shuttle.

Cannibalised are Leyland National Greenway TCW 898T and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Derwent G958 WNR.

Scania/Irizar coaches 220/1 (T720/1 JHE) have been re-registered FNZ 7714/5.

Anglian, Beccles

SlimLine Optare Solos AU03 HWS and AU54 EOA have been route-branded for the 'Broads Hopper' and can tow a bicycle trailer on an Acle-Blickling Hall service supported by Norfolk County Council, the National Trust and One Railway. East Lancs-bodied Volvo Olympian R361 DJN is branded for service 588 (Norwich-Halesworth).

Arriva Cymru AA

Optare Tempos YJ55 BKG/K/L/N/O/U/V are numbered as 2860-6 and Wrexham-based Optare Alero YN04 XZH is 619. Of the Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 2 B39F from Arriva North East, Llandudno Junction has 2109/23/7 (R609 MHN, S623/7 KHN) and Chester 2110/4/9/20/8-30 (S610 KHN etc). Further Darts transferred in are 2130-5 (S630-5 KHN).

The only Leyland Lynx remaining is Bangor-based 1750 (H130 LPU).

Arriva Derby AA

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers 2089/90 (N689/90 GUM) are here from Arriva Midlands at Southgates, exchanged for Scania 3492/3 (N432/3 XRC), which are for use on revised X67 (Loughborough-Leicester-Coventry).

Ex-Williamson Optare Excel 2998 (P315 FAW) is here from Swadlincote and the only other Excel that Arriva owns, 2999, is also expected at Derby soon, in exchange for a Volvo B10BLE (one of 3604-6).

Now historically significant 'last major fleet' Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties 4301 (GTO 301V) returned to use after the school summer holidays. Volvo Citybus 4380 (A130 DTO) has been sold for scrap while 4323 (H654 GPF) is reported to have caught fire at the city's bus station. The five remaining Marshall-bodied Citybuses remain in frontline daily service.

AEC Majestic recovery vehicle 399 (VTC 733H), which served here since November 1976, has been sold.

Arriva London AA

The rest of the articulated Mercedes-Benz Citaro Gs for the 38 are MA98-122 (BX55 FUV/W/Y, FVA-D/F-H/J-P/R-V/W-Z). MA123/4 (BX55 FWG/H) have been delivered out of the next batch for the 29, which is converted to artics in January; these are being followed by MA125-57 (BX55 FWJ-N/P/R/S-W/Y/Z, FXB/C/E-H/J-M/O/P/R-W/Y).

Leyland Olympian L315 (J315 BSH) has been transferred to **The Original London Sightseeing Tour**.

AEC Routemasters RML2350, 2588, 2684 (CUV 350C, JJD 558D, SMK 684F) have gone to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer). More Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties sold by Ensign to Go North East are L527/9/44-6 (G527 VBB etc).

Arriva Midlands AA

Dennis Falcon 3093 (G383 EKA) has been withdrawn. However further to last month's report, 3089 (K219 UHA) remains in service in Oswestry, where the current Falcon fleet includes 3078/89/95 (G308 DPA, K219 UHA, G385 EKA).

Arriva North East AA

New are Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart/DP29F 1774/5 (NK05 GWU/V), at Blyth for Whitley Bay services W1-W4, the contract for which specified low-floor and Euro3 compliance.

The only example of its type with Arriva, (*pictured below*) Mercedes-Benz OH1416/Wright Urbanranger B47F 3027 (N750 LUS, *WSU 476*, N750 LUS) transferred from Arriva Scotland West to Arriva Tees in September, joining the group's Mercedes O405s here.

Picture by **DANIEL STAZICKER**



Left: Arriva Midlands 2371 (FJ55 BWA), one of seven 10.7m Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts in predominantly aquamarine livery for service 825 (Stafford-Lichfield). It is making the tight squeeze beneath the West Coast main line at Little Haywood, an obstacle that dictates the use of lower height buses; in Midland Red days, Leyland Nationals with roof pods were too high to pass under the bridge.

LUKE GOTTARD

Ex-Arriva Cymru Mercedes-Benz Varios S350 PGA and R796 DUB have been numbered 2662/72, while Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointers Darts 1630-5 (S630-5 KHN) have joined the Cymru fleet.

Richmond is now an all-minibus depot, its one working on services 34/X26 (Darlington-Richmond) being transferred to Darlington. Services 54/X54 (Richmond-Catterick/Darlington) were withdrawn and service 73 (Northallerton-Bedale) reduced to just two journeys a day to Richmond, which gained Optare MetroRiders 887/98 (N887 RTN, P57 XTN) from Blyth and lost Olympian 7271 and SB220s 4022/85/7/9/96.

The last Tees & District double-deckers, Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 7279/80/3 (G756/7/60 UYT), have transferred to Northumbria at Jesmond.

Darlington's accident damaged MetroRider 2612 (P612 FHN) has been sent for repair and similar 870 (M870 KCU) is back in use as a float vehicle to cover for vehicles being fitted with radios and satellite tracking.

MCW Metrobuses 621/3/4 (A959 SYE, B112/6 WUL) are back in service at Jesmond. 614/20 (GYE 515W, WLT 954) are also listed as withdrawn, but remain active. 604/22 (KYV 646X, A973 SYF) have been painted yellow for schools work.

Optare MetroRiders 2611 (P611 FHN), 2727/39 (M441 HPF, N802 BKN), DAF SB220/Optare Delta 4094, 4106 (G255 UYK, F701 ECC) and Leyland Olympian/ECW 7266 (CWR 519Y) have been withdrawn.

Arriva North West AA

Mercedes-Benz Citaros 2851-3 (CX55 EAA/C/E) are DP39F and entered service as expected on new Manchester-Liverpool Airport service 700 on 22 October. Due shortly at Runcorn are VDL SB120CS/Wright Cadet DP39F 2514-55 (DK55 FWY/Z, FXA-H/J/L/M/O/R-Z, FYA-H/J/L-P/R-T/V/W).

Birkenhead-based Volvo Olympian 3308 (N308 CKV) has been fitted with an LED destination display.

Dennis Darts 1110 (L940 GYL), 1233 (N233 CKA) and 1342 (M162 SKR) are out of use with engine failure, but Leyland Olympian 3041 (A141 MRN) is back in service at Crewe after receiving an engine from a Titan.

Dawsonrentals allover white Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer 7681/2 (S377 TMB, W559 JVV) have been on loan at Skelmersdale.

The former Blue Bus Eccles depot closed on 3 September and its allocation is shared between Manchester (76-83, 890-4, 1924-31, 2563-9) and Bolton (1932).

The Leyland Lynx stock had shrunk to just six in September, 1747/52-5/7 (G327 NUM, H254 PAJ, H733 HWK, J654/5 UHN, K27 EWC), plus 1750 (H130 LPU) with Arriva Cymru at Bangor and 1743 (G49 CVC) in the disposal pool. East Lancs-bodied Dart 1222 (M322 AKB) has been withdrawn.

Arriva Southend AA

Grays-based Dennis Dart SLF 3405 (P325 HVX) has been scrapped and fire damaged SLF 3424 (P424 HVX) is being cannibalised. Replacement Darts for these were the oldest ex-Kent Thameside Northern Counties-bodied example, 3112 (L112 YVK), and ex-Surrey & West Sussex East Lancs-bodied 3047 (L509 CPJ).

Arriva Southern Counties AA

DAF SB3000/Plaxton Premiers 2903-8/10 (R903-8/10 BKO) and Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 5924 (M924 PKN) have been transferred to **New Enterprise**.

Mercedes-Benz 609D F070 (G70 PKR) has been withdrawn from the ancillary fleet. Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton 2846 (H846 AHS) has gone to Arriva the Shires & Essex. MCW Metrobus 5280 (B80 WUL) and Volvo Citybus 7616 (G616 BPH) have been sold to Fleetlink (dealer).

Arriva the Shires & Essex AA

The first of the new Optare Solos are 2461/2 (KE55 FDG/F). Three are due for Harlow services 46 (Ongar-Chelmsford) and 214 (Debden local) and three for Ware's C1 (Cuffley-Turnford).

Meanwhile the first of the Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B44F at Luton are 3601-6 (KE55 CTV/U, FBY/X, CTK), the whole batch being 3601-19. 3607-14 were in stock by early October, but were held back for a formal launch of the Luton Overdrive scheme on 31 October, which will see the end of double-decker operation in Luton, apart from schools services.

Ex-Southern Counties DAF SB3000/Premiere 4055/6 (R455/6 SKX) and 4909 (R909 BKO) are here for Green



Above: Arriva North West has the first three Mercedes-Benz Citaros for one of the group's UK fleets outside London. Like the others, 2851 (CX55 EAA) wears a special livery for new service 700 (Manchester-Liverpool Airport). **LUKE GOTTARD**

Line service 797 (Baldock/Stevenage-London), replacing ex-Sovereign Volvo B10M/Plaxton 4013/4/41 (P317/8 RGS, KE51 WUO), which have returned to Blazefield and have been advertised for sale. Also acquired from Arriva Southern Counties is Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount 3500 C53F 4846 (H846 AHS).

Ex-Sovereign Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 3301/7 (W128/34 XRO) are in new Arriva corporate express-style Centraline livery for services 300/301 (Stevenage-Hemel Hempstead). Another ex-Sovereign bus in Arriva colours is Mini Pointer Dart 3086 (KE53 KBP). Ex-Sovereign B10M/Alexander PS-types 3330-2 (M234 TBV, M782/3 PRS) now appear mainly on schools work.

Leyland Olympian/Alexander RL-type 5095 (G645 UPP) awaits a decision on its future after hitting a low bridge. Leyland Olympian driver trainer 5069 (A149 FPG) and dual-door 5843 (D242 FYM) returned to service at Stevenage, but 5069 has since been sold.

Dennis Dart 3099 (K447 XPA), Volvo B6 3126 (M726 OMJ), Dart 3355 (K405 FHJ) and Volvo B10M 4332 (H567 MPD) have been withdrawn. Olympians 5844/5 (D211/31 FYM) have passed to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) and 5854/6 (D167/9 FYM) have gone for scrap. 5841 (D203 FYM) has been disused at Ware since May and is unlikely to be used again. Other vehicles sold are Leyland Lynx 3074 (F404 PUR), Volvo B6 3243 (M843 DDS), Volvo B10Ms 4040 (YIB 2396 C510 LGH) and 4333 (H845 AHS).

Ashley, Renishaw, Derbyshire

Leyland Leopard PSU5E/4R/Plaxton GHL 172V (84 DWB, NEV 806V) has been acquired from Burdett, Mosborough and wears a white and turquoise livery.

Aston, Kempsey, Worcs

Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts VX05 TZO, UHS are reported here.

Avon, Prenton, Wirral

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointers Y213 BCB and Y486 TSU are in stock from Gibson Direct, Renfrew and have ousted only recently-acquired Dennis Lance SLF/Berkhof 174, 200 (WIL 9216/7), which have reverted to original marks M966 SDP and M197 UAN.

Another former flooded Stagecoach Carlisle Volvo B6/Alexander Dash acquired is L271 LHH; thus far, only L272 LHH is in service.

The last MCW Metrobus, B2 AVN (C776 OCN), has been sold to Stafford Bus Centre (dealer). Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs R54 OCK has passed to Beaumont, Gloucester.

Birmingham Coach Company

Ex-Stagecoach Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde N902/3 PFC are in service. They were new to Thames Transit.

Blackburn Transport

Further to previous reports, the last two ex-Ambassador Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns are 211/2 (T124/2 OAH).

An autumn repainting programme into the Schools+ livery (80% yellow, 20% green) was due to include Volvo B6/East Lancs 533 (M533 RCW) and Leyland Olympians 33-8, 82-4 (A703/4/19-21 YFS, B737/8 GSC, D324 YNO, D133/44 FYM) and Leyland Titans 90-100 (A618 THV, KYV 521/5/33/44/45/26/17/08, 465, 306X).

Olympians 47 and 54 (B747/54 GSC) will become trainers, not 57/8 as planned.

Black Prince, Morley

Scania N113DRB/Alexander 307 (E307 EVW) is confirmed sold to Blythwood, Glasgow (dealer), similar 380 (E380 JTV) passing to Harrogate Coach Company. N113DRB/East Lancs 34 (C34 ETG) and Alexander-bodied 381 (E381 ERB) passed to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap.

Mercedes-Benz O405/Optare Prisms 202, 441 and 577 (TIL 7902, R202 YOR; P441 SWX, N577 EUG) all passed to Red Kite, St Helens and 905 (S905 DUB) has returned to Henderson, Hamilton to whom it was new, while Road Car has acquired the remaining four, 201/3 and 901/2 (TIL 7901, R201 YOR; R203 YOR; S901/2 DUB).

East Lancs-bodied Leyland Titan PD3/4 702 (FTF 702F) remains in Black Prince ownership and is based at Texas Street, Morley, the main Morley yard having been cleared some time ago. Roe-bodied ex-Leeds PD3/5 280 (5280 NW) surprisingly joined the London-focused Ensign, Purfleet museum fleet.

Bowen, Tamworth

Ex-Wallace Arnold Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 350 W606 FUM is the first of two acquired.

Brighton & Hove GA

Ex-Stagecoach Dennis Lance SLF 285 (M408 OKM) was repainted in new Brighton & Hove livery by Caetano at Waterlooville and was followed by ex-Stagecoach Trident 881 (T669 KPU).

Bromyard Omnibus

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Marshall C19s 187/8 (VIL 4058/7) are confirmed as previously S643/2 MGA respectively. They're now named after Anglo-Saxon invaders *Horsa* and *Hengist* and came from Chariots, Stanford-le-Hope.

Burnley & Pendle BL

Volvo B10B-58/Alexander Strider DP49F 503/5 (N503/5 HWY) have been transferred from Keighley & District for new service 263 (Burnley-Accrington).

Burton, Haverhill TGM

Acquired from Uno (Universitybus), Hatfield, are DAF SB220/Northern Counties B49F P907/8 UWW. Ex-Tellings-Golden Miller Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beavers S107/8 HGX have made their way here via Travel London, which didn't use them.

Buzzlines, Lympne, Kent

Having had the first 13.7m Neoplan Skyliner in the UK, this operator now has the first 13m Setra S416-GT HD, tri-axle YE55 BUZ.

Cambridge Blue EB

Ex-Arriva London Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1RH/ECW H42/26D 108 (C808 BYY) is here, in blue livery primarily for service 007 (Station-City Centre) leaving MCW Metrobuses free for rail replacement work as their higher top speed is useful for this. This Olympian is earmarked for eventual preservation in the Ensignbus museum.

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group

Carter, Ipswich

Ex-London Central AEC Routemaster/Park Royal H36/28R CUV 270C has been acquired.

Cavalier Contracts, Long Sutton

Mercedes-Benz/UVG Trekka Y334 PNW is reported with First West Yorkshire.

Centra

Having sold its other interests to Rotalla, trading as Flights Hallmark, this operator now runs only the former Mitcham Belle services in London, plus various car park shuttle services around Heathrow.

Chelmsford Taxibus

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton B405 CMC is a full-sized addition to this fleet. Meanwhile, new short wheelbase Ford Transits are EF05 OMB/C, OLV/X, while EO03 UUG and EY03 NFT have been sold. The Stansted Airport Cars operation has been renamed Checker Cars and operates only Ford Galaxy people carriers.

Choice, Willenhall

A sign of the recent change in ownership is the arrival of Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts 16/7 (GNZ 3561/2 V260/5 BNV) from new parent D&G, Addeley Green, exchanged for two Dart/Wright Handybuses including K856 PCN.

City Sightseeing EB

A second Volvo B7L/Ayats City Bravo for Stratford-upon-Avon is part-open-top 275 (EU05 VBP). Former Guide Friday Leyland Fleetline/Northern Counties UKV 482R (PAU 197R) has been exported by parent Ensign to Engel & Volkes, Palma, Majorca.

C&N, Barrow-upon-Soar, Leics

This operator has moved to a new operating base on Hayhill Industrial Estate, having outgrown its previous premises in Leicester. Former East Yorkshire Leyland Olympian/ECW JTY 384X is in stock.

Cooper, Killamarsh

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Bustler G746 FTW is in fleet livery albeit without fleetnames and is allocated to Grimsby.

The current fleet disposition shows RIL 1018, TIB 2057, 520 FUM, TXI 2426, PIL 2693, PJI 2457, R70, 80, 90 JCS, YN53 YCR, YN54 VLE, LYH 148P and MPR 534H allocated to Killamarsh, while those allocated to Grimsby are NHR 165M, HVD 733N, HMW 176P, ARP 610/1X, DWW 931Y, RIL 3746, SIL 7764, 957 XYB, A546 HAC, G746 FTW, G77 NWJ, P99 CCH, K698 SWD and T627 JVR. Caring Coaches has CCZ 6058, SIW 2278 and RHE 969X.

Country Lion, Northampton

New is a second Irisbus EuroRider/Plaxton Panther, A10 CLC.

Courtney, Bracknell

The four Alexander Dennis Enviro300/B60F schoolbuses are registered SN55 DUV/Y, DVA/B.

Crusader, Clacton

Three new Setra S415GTHD and two 13m S416GTD coaches are expected in February, all C48Ft. The two S416s will be the company's first tri-axle coaches. S315s T107/9/11/20 LTW are to be replaced.



Above: Since taking over Choice Travel, D&G has begun replacing the former owners' yellow and green livery with its own blue and cream. K856 PCN is one of two ex-Go North East Dennis Darts with Wright Handybus bodywork that have been transferred to the original D&G operation in the Potteries in exchange for two low-floor Darts. **CLIFF BEETON**

Cumfybus, Southport

Merseytravel tendered services have been gained in St Helens, and pending the arrival of further Optare Solos they are being operated by ex-London United Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer J379/80 GKH, J141 DUV and ex-London Central Dart/East Lancs L901/7 JRN.

De Courcy, Coventry

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F T464 HNH has been on loan from Dawsonrentals.

Don's, Dunmow

Neoplan Euroliner N316HSD/C49Ft YR02 UOG has come from Bowers, Chapel-en-le-Frith. Dennis Javelin/Marcopolo M706 HBC is resealed to C70F, ex-C51Ft.

All operational Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlanteans have been withdrawn following loss of school contracts. JGA 189N, JUS 774N and YDS 650S have all gone to preservationists in Scotland (see p45). EJR 113W has been scrapped by a Doncaster dealer and ex-Boon's MVK 538R remains on-site, stripped for spares.

Doyle, Alfreton, Derbyshire

Iveco 49.10/Mellor L525 BDH was new to Coventry City Council as a non-psv.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

New coaches reported by the PSV Circle are 5501 (FJ55 BXO), an MAN/Caetano C24Ft midi for a Rolls-Royce staff contract and Volvo B12B/Sunsundegui Sideral C53F 5502-11 (FJ55 YCE-H/K-P).

Ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus DR102/70/H43/30F F103 XOF is allocated to Lincoln and older BOK 73V is in service at Nottingham ex-Lincoln. Optare Solo YN04 LWS and MAN/Optare Vecta N290 NWY are at Lincoln ex-Nottingham.

Operation of the Horncastle-Lincoln Christ's Hospital school service has been retained into the autumn term and 86-seat Nottingham 'standard' Volvo Citybus/East Lancs A399 CRA has transferred to Lincoln accordingly. The MASS tri-axle Leyland Olympians retained on loan at Lincoln returned home by September.

Eagre, Morton, Lincs

Iveco EuroRider/Beulas Stergo E RE05 ANN will be followed by the first of a new generation of EuroRider with Beulas Cygnus C49Ft body, which appeared at Coach & Bus Live in October.

Eastbourne Buses

DAF SB220/ikarus 116 (L416 UNJ) has been converted into a display vehicle for East Sussex County Council's Travel Choices Exhibition. Ex-Stagecoach Mercedes-Benz 709D 330 (L330 YKV) is on loan to Autopoint, Bodle Street.

DAF SB3000/ikarus coach 905 (R115 GNW), the first vehicle in the Flagship Coaches livery in 2003, has been sold to Goodwin, Manchester.

East Yorkshire EY

New Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Geminiis 702-5 (YX55 DHJ-M) are branded for route X46 (York-Hull).

Edwards, Llantwit Fardre

New here are wheelchair-accessible MAN/Marcopolo C55FL CN55 FBX and Mercedes-Benz Vario O815/Sitar Beluga C29F WJ55 EWD. Additional MCW Metrobuses acquired are former Reading HCF 179W, LMO 186X, former London BYX 252V and former Manchester ANA 161Y.

Ellise, Cannock

This operator has ex-Dublin Bus Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) Sprint L516 DNX (93 D 8005), still in Dublin City Imp livery and named *Paddy's Revenge*.

Epsom Coaches

Two Setra S416GT-HDs are on order.

Evergreen, Blackheath

Neoplan Euroliner YN05 BVO is in use.

Excel, Stansted

Ex-Beachy Head Bus Company, Bexhill Leyland Olympian/ECW B204 DTU, acquired via Stephenson, Rochford (dealer), is in Excel blue — as is Olympian/East Lancs KTL 44Y. Also in use in mid-September were ex-ACL, Aintree Olympian/ECW coach D81 UTF and ex-Fargo, Rayne MCW Metrobus A634 BCN.

Scania K113/Van Hool J111, 555 SAS, Leyland Tiger/Wright RXI 5540 and DAF MB/Duple F860 YJX have left Excel for Stephenson's dealer stock. J111 SAS passed to Reilly, Bootle.

Fairbrother, Warrington

Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties F455/9 BKF, repainted in allover Arriva aquamarine, have replaced former Cardiff Olympian/East Lancs 25/7 (RBO 507Y, A513 VKG).

Fargo, Rayne, Essex

Leyland Atlantean stock has been decimated, with

Left: Dunn-Line FJ55 BXO, the new Caetano Enigma-bodied MAN midicoach dedicated to a contract to carry Rolls-Royce workers between Derby and Bristol on Mondays to Thursdays. **LEE TURTON**



Leyland Olympians replacing East Lancs-bodied URN 208/9V, GFV 155W and KCK 203/4W. Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider E200 UWT has passed to Swift Cars, Chelmsford.

Farleigh, Rochester

Volvo Citybus B10M-50/Northern Counties DPH45/35D G102 NGN is in stock from Grampian Foods, Five Ash Down.

First Berkshire FG

The plan to use Volvo Olympians/Alexander Royale CH43/22FL coaches on Green Line services 702 and X7 has apparently been thwarted by plans for a London low emission zone, possibly as early as 2007.

A clear out of redundant stock at Bracknell has seen PSV Salvage (dealer) take Leyland National 2 LS470 (GUW 470W), Dart/Wright 45410 (KDZ 5110) and MCW Metrobus 90172 (C420 BUV). None of them carried national fleetnumbers.

First Bristol FG

Further ex-First London Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties are H43/29F 34007-9 (N307-9 JBV) and H43/27F 34042/3/5/7 (P242/3/5/7 UCW), leaving just 34044 (P244 UCW) to enter service.

Leyland Lynxes 62649/59 (H649/59 YHT) have been withdrawn and Dennis Dart 46612 (M512 DHU) has been sold. Leyland Olympian 34565 (A965 THW) passed to Avon Fire Brigade while Olympians 34645/77, 34741/3/68/88 (CUB 45Y, EWR 77Y, B41/2, 68 PJA, C188 YBA), Dennis Dart 45407 (KDZ 5107) and Leyland Lynxes 62615/6/8/36/62 (F615/6/8 RTC, H636/62 YHT) have gone for scrap. Driver trainers sold are Volvo B10M/Van Hool 90227 (LSU 788, D601 GHY) and Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare StarRider 90228 (E823 MOU).

First Cymru FG

Further Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile C45FL are Port Talbot-based 20364/5/7/8/70 (CV55 AFE, AHA, AGX/Z/Y); they were delivered with 05 registrations. Similar 20360/1/3 are branded for Shuttle 100, 20357/64 for the X2 (Porthcawl-Cardiff).

Shuttle branding has been removed from Dennis Javelin coaches 21109/10. Hired M626 XWS has been given temporary fleetnumber 67501.

Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount 20066 (K924 RGE) and Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Expressliner 21091 (M291 FAE) have gone to First Mainline Engineering, Rotherham.

First Devon & Cornwall FG

New are Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts 43845-8 (SN55 CXH/F/J/E).

Much travelled Dennis Dart/Marshall DP39F 40289 (M946 SRE) has landed here. It began life with PMT, went to First Manchester, then Eastern Counties and has come here following a stint as a crew bus with First London. Also from London are Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H47/30F 34329/39 (H129/39 FLX).

Dart 47109 (P409 MLA) is confirmed in service at Barnstaple. Camborne-based Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties 30108 (B37 PJA) has been on loan to First Hampshire & Dorset at Weymouth.

First Eastern Counties FG

Leyland Olympians 34357-9 (KGG 157-9Y), 34864 (C374 CAS) have been sold for scrap and 34926 (G126 YEV) is being cannibalised for spares. Also withdrawn are Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50941 (K641 GVX), 51247 (L647 MEV), 51384 (M384 KVR) and Mercedes 711D 51628 (N628 GAH).

First Essex FG

BMC 1100FE schoolbuses are confirmed as B60F 68532/4/5 (LK54 FNE/L, EU05 DXR) and, with wheelchair lift, B55FL 68551/2 (EU05 DXS/T). 68534 (LK54 FNL) was originally LK54 FNJ, but this has moved on to Southampton without use in Essex. They entered service on 2 September. Leyland Olympians 34807-9/15-7/9 remained in use at Chelmsford this autumn even after the replacement BMCs arrived.

Remaining Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 51476, 51780/2 (M676 VJN, P680/2 HPU), are concentrated at Dovercourt. Mercedes Vario O814D/Marshalls 52580-5 (V430-5 GTW) have returned from Transit Group, which is now running its own vehicles on Village Link 5 and 7.

The last Leyland in the Southend area, Olympian DP



Above: First Somerset & Avon 10176 (WX55 HWB) is one of nine new articulated Volvo B7LAs with Wright Eclipse Fusion bodies. All wear this updated Bright Orange livery for the Bath University service. **STEVE RICE**

34809 (C409 HJN), is in reserve. Olympian 34817 (C417 HJN) was the last double-decker in yellow and green. Dennis Dart/Plaxton 46118 (M918 TEV) is the last vehicle in Thamesway yellow/pink.

Dart 46112 (K912 CVW) has been withdrawn. Leyland Lynx trainer 90246 (F429 MJN) has been sold. Olympian 34808 (C408 HJN) has gone to First Wyvern.

First Hampshire & Dorset FG

New BMC 1100FE schoolbuses 68561/2 (HX55 AOJ/K) are in use in First Student yellow. Optare Solo YJ05 XOP is at work at Hilsa on service 45A and does not carry its fleetnumber 53113 (originally, it was 51113).

Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B39F 42303 (P303 AUM) has been transferred from First Somerset & Avon, but 50301 (S407 GUB) has not arrived as expected. Ex-First Potteries 42303 (P303 AUM) and Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 50079/80 (P428/9 MEH) are out of use, awaiting allocation. Recently acquired Scania K113CRB/Van Hool Alizée 62265 (ESK 257) is still numbered in the bus series, despite being a coach.

First Devon & Cornwall Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties H43/30F 30108 (B37 PJA) arrived on tow recently, and is reported on loan at Weymouth.

Gas-powered Darts 49960/4 (N160/4 GOT) are out of use at Portswood.

Confirmed withdrawn are Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton 20062 (595 JPU), MCW Metrobus 35486 (GYE 485W) — the last in the fleet, Bristol VRT/SL2 39555 (ATA 555L), Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton 50178 (M206 VWU), 50212/7 (N294 JUG, M204 VWU), 709D/Alexander 51279 (M279 UYD), Mercedes 811D/Marshall 51391 (M766 FTT), 709D/Plaxton 51584 (N884 RWS), Leyland Lynxes 62545/8-50 (G105/8 WRV, G109/10 XOW) and 62642 (H642 YHT). Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW 38770 (AFJ 770T) has passed to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

First Leicester FG

Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 32631-5 (KP54 KBF/J, LAE/O, KX05 MGW) have been transferred in from First Northampton to convert service 12 to double-deck operation, but with frequency from every 10 to every 15min. However, Volvo B7RLE 66969 (KX05 MJU) has joined 66976 at First Wyvern.

The only route branded vehicles here now are Leyland Lynxes 62723/33 (G123/33 HNP), publicising service 17 (City-Highfields).

Work on the restoration of Dennis Dominator 233 (UFP 233S) has been stopped and it is in store at lbstock.

Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 48045 (N345 CJA) has gone to First Glasgow.

First London FG

New are Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini H41/21D VNW32657-68 (LK55 ACO/U, AAE/F/J/N/U/X/Y, ABF).

The ex-Eastern Counties crew shuttle Dennis Dart/Marshall, 40289 (M946 SRE), was short lived; it has moved on to First Devon & Cornwall, as have Leyland Olympians LDN34329/39 (H129/39 FLX). Dennis Trident TN32821 (T821 LLC) has joined others at First Glasgow.

First Manchester FG

Further Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban are 66884/5/91/3/9 (MX55 HHO, MX05 CLF, MX55 UAA,

LDK, FFK), 66902-18/20-32 (MX55 FFO/P/R/W/Y/Z, FGA/C/E/F/G/J/K/N/P/U/V/Z, FHA-G) with just 66919/33 (MX55 FGM, FHH) outstanding at the time of writing.

New BMC 1100FE/B60F yellow schoolbuses for the Ince schools unit are 68555-7 (MX55 NWS/C/D). Another ex-First West Yorkshire Dennis Arrow for the schools unit is Northern Counties H49/35F-bodied 30586 (P413 MTW), exchanged for Scania N113DRB/East Lancs 30252 (G804 JRH), while further Arrow/East Lancs Pyoneer H49/27D from First Somerset & Avon are 31933/43/50 (P433/43/50 ULE). Arrows 31944/9 (R844 YLC, R449 ULE) were rebuilt to H47/31F before entering service.

Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde B49F 60942/5/6/8/54/6/8/83-6/9 (M404/7/8/10/6/8/20 VWV, N445/6 ENW, N451 JUG) have been transferred from First West Yorkshire to the Rail Support Unit at Trafford Park, which technically is under First CentreWest control from London.

Optare Solos 53149/50 (MX54 GZG/H) are in a purple version of Metroshuttle livery for new route 3.

Volvo B10L/Wright Liberator 60351 (N558 BNF) was withdrawn here in August and Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/Northern Counties 30134 (B129 WNB) transferred to First Aberdeen in October.

First Northampton FG

Volvo B7RLE 66982-7 (KX05 MHL-O/U/V) have been transferred to First Wyvern and Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers 32631-5 (KP54 KBF/J, LAE/O, KX05 MGW) have gone to First Leicester.

First Potteries FG

Dennis Lance/Northern Counties 60096 (L862 HFA) remains in stock (Fleet News, September), as an unallocated pool vehicle, but it has gone to the Rotherham engineering works. Leyland Olympian/ECW 30079 (B202 DTU) has been withdrawn at Chester.

First Somerset & Avon FG

The last two of the new Big Orange Volvo B7LA/Wright Eclipse Fusion AB56D artics are 10181/2 (WX55 HWG/H).

Dennis Arrows 31933/43/50 (R433/43/50 ULE) have passed to First Manchester and Volvo B10M/Alexander P-types 66506/9 (D106/9 GHY) have unusually been sold to Silcox, Pembroke Dock; First buses are not usually sold on to other operators.

First South Yorkshire FG

Ex-London Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 34103/5 (T903/5 KLF) are in use at Doncaster. Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renown 60694 (T876 ODT) is back in service ex-reserve.

The oldest Dennis Dominator still in passenger service here, 24-year old Alexander-bodied 30398 (KKU 120W), has received the latest First livery, making its first appearance at the Trans-Lancs rally in Manchester on 4 September. However, Dominator/East Lancs 30520 (F292 PTP) is withdrawn.

A temporary shortage of driver trainers has been alleviated by the use of Dominators 30443/4 (A316/7 XAK). Subsequently, they have been assisted by Stagecoach Volvo B6/Alexander 30242 (L242 CCK), on loan into October.

Dominators 30432/71 (UWJ 284Y, A430 YAK) and Mercedes-Benz 709D 50216 (M202 VWU) have been removed by PVS, Carlton (dealer).

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group

Right: First West Yorkshire 30829 (R649 HYG), the Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympian repainted to publicise discounted student fares. The wording on the nearside reads 'More Vino'.
DANIEL STAZICKER

First West Yorkshire FG

Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini 32537-42 (YJ05 VUX/W, VWG/E/F/H) are in service as intended at Halifax.

Scania N113DRB/East Lancs H51/37F 30252 (G804 JRH) has been transferred from the first Manchester school fleet at Ince, and is understood to be the first of five to retain yellow livery and operate from Bramley garage. It operated from Bramley once before when it was in use for the Carling Festival special services to Bramham Park in August 2003. Dennis Arrow 30586 (P413 MTW) has gone to the First Manchester school unit. A further Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties from First South Yorkshire is 34234 (P234 MPU).

Leyland Lynx G137 HNP is confirmed numbered 62737. Bradford-based Leyland Olympian 30677 (G184 JYG) was repainted royal blue with white lettering in preparation for vinyls for Bradford College but accident damage shortly afterwards led to its place being taken by Volvo Olympian/Alexander Royale 30829 (R649 HYG), which is royal blue.

Already, two Black Prince liveries have been eradicated; Scania 36927 was the last in blue/cream and 36936 the last in Leeds City Transport duo-green.

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton Beaver 50190 (R123 XDT) has been on loan from First South Yorkshire for route learning, as Mercedes 709D 90087 (J612 UTW) has been out of action.

Optare Solo 50296 (W327 DWX) has gone to First Wyvern, and Dennis Lancs 60942/5/6/8/54/6/8/83-6/9 (M404/7/8/10/6/8/20 VWW, N445/6 ENW, N451 JUG) to First Rail Support Unit at Trafford Park, Manchester (under First CentreWest control).

Withdrawn are Leyland Olympians 30589, 30775/6/9 (JHU 900X, B519/20 UWW). Red ex-Southampton Leyland Atlantean/East Lancs driver trainer 90070 (PBP 230S) went to PVS, Carlton (dealer) for scrap after use by Huddersfield, along with fire-damaged Scania L113 61045 (M401 UUB).

First has applied for planning permission to turn a warehouse in Atkinson Street, Hunslet, Leeds into a bus garage.

First Wyvern FG

Volvo B7RLE/Wright Eclipse Urban B43F 66982-7 (KX05 MHL-O/U/V) have been transferred from First Northampton for services 44 and 144, in part to replace the two Enviro300s now on Worcester Express (see last month). 66976 remains on loan and has been joined by 66969 (KX05 MJU).

Optare Solo M850/B27F 50296 (W327 DWX) has come to Worcester from First West Yorkshire, Volvo Olympian/Alexander H47/32F 31451-5 (N962-6 SOS) from First Glasgow and Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW CH42/30F 34808 (C408 HJN) from First Essex.

Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beaver 2s 52506 (R506 CNP) and 52512/8/20/1 (S512 RWP etc) have been transferred to First Glasgow.



Withdrawals recorded by the PSV Circle are of Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 22005 (B105 JAB) and Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beavers 51264/5-70/5/6 (N264 JUG etc),

First York FG

Further to last month's Millar's Tales, the first 11 production examples of the Volvo B9LA/Wright StreetCar are due here to convert Overground route 4 (University-Acomb) to 'ftr' rapid transit standards. The first of these buses is undergoing test track trials and others are in build. Local press reports suggest it is unlikely to start until March. Residents on Heslington Road and Lawrence Street have protested against plans to run the service past their homes. These form part of an initial First order for 39 StreetCars; it has an option to take another 61 if it succeeds in selling the 'ftr' concept to other local authorities.

Leyland National 2 driver trainer 90084 (YFS 310W) — the last new to the Scottish Bus Group — was acquired for preservation at the Scottish Vintage Bus Museum, where it will be returned to original Eastern Scottish livery. Similar 90085 (PNW 601W) went to a Barnsley scrap dealer in late-September

Fishwick, Leyland

Two further new VDL SB200/Wrightbus Commanders are 28/9 (YJ55 KZP/R).

Flights Hallmark

The former Flights and Hallmark coach operations are now running under this name, having been bought out by Rotala from Centra. Centra's local bus services in Surrey and Sussex are included and these are being rebranded as Surrey Connect and Sussex Connect.

Additions to the bus fleet — which retains Centra's red, silver and blue livery — include Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts YT51 DZZ, EAJ for former Travel London services 426, 446; they are the first of five to replace vehicles on hire from Dawsonrentals. DAF DB250/Northern Counties Palatine II R382 GTW, new to Harris Bus, has been acquired from Courtney, Bracknell, for service 400 (Staines-Walton).

Florida, Halstead, Essex

This operator has acquired Volvo Citybus/East Lancs G659 DTH from Arriva Kent Thameside.

Ford, Althorne, Essex

Acquisitions are Scania N113DRB/Alexander H47/33D G48, 50 FKG from Newport Transport, Iveco EuroRider/Beulas C51Ft FN02 VBX from Timeline, Bolton and Ayats Bravo/CH57/18Ft Y8 CCL from Courtney, Bracknell.

DAF SB3000/Jonckheere KUI 8329 (C141 KFL) has passed to Falcon, Welwyn Garden City.

Gemini, Ipswich

Ex-Metroline MAN 11.220/Marshall N124 XEG is in stock.

Glover, Ashbourne

A second ex-Northern Scottish Dennis Lancel/Alexander P-type here is KAZ 4505 (A505 FSS) from Coombs, Weston-super-Mare. It arrived 14 years after A506 FSS arrived direct from its original owner.

Leyland Leopard/Duple Dominant II NNU 71W is with a Lincolnshire preservationist, reducing the Leopard tally in Derbyshire to just three.

Go North East GA

Five Scania L94UB/Wright Solars are on order for the X50 (South Shields-Durham) and X20 Sunderland-Durham) and four Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Gemini double-deckers for the 724 (Bishop Auckland-Newcastle).

More Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties H47/27D from Arriva London are 3954/6/9/60/1 (G527/9/44/6/5 VBB), while another Alexander-bodied Olympian from the Isle of Man is former Dublin Bus 3949 (H589 EGU). The ex-Arriva London Leyland Olympian/ECWs on loan from Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) have been numbered 9024/46/9/50/6/65/79 (C24 CHM etc), 9185, 9230/47/58 (D185 FYM etc); 9049 and 9230 have returned to Ensign.

Meanwhile six used DAF SB220GS/Plaxton Prestige, from the batch used originally to connect with Heathrow Express trains, are being acquired from Arriva Bus & Coach; the first to arrive are 4984/6/7 (R972/9/82 FNW) and they introduce a new style of fleet livery.

Below: Go North East 4986 (R979 FNW), one of the newly acquired Plaxton Prestige-bodied DAF SB220s in the new version of the standard fleet livery.
GARY MITCHELHILL



Most of the former London DAF DB250/Optare Spectras have been reallocated to Go-Gateshead, shared between Percy Main and Sunderland Road. 3855 (K323 FYG) carries a full offside depiction of a former Sunderland Corporation tramcar, on behalf of the Beamish open-air museum.

Enviro300 demonstrator 4977 (SN04 EGF) has returned to Alexander Dennis.

DAF SB220/Optare Deltas 4735/7/44/5 (G735 RTY etc) have passed to Tyne Blue Line, Low Prudhoe; ex-OK Travel Volvo B6/Alexander Dash 8415 (L415 KEF) is with South Mymms Transport, St Albans and 8425 (M425 PVN) with Red Route, Northfleet.

Ensign has exported Leyland National 2s 4660/1/4/83 and 4721 (UPT 660/1/4/83V, TJR 721Y) to the Gime American University, Northern Cyprus.

Goodwin, Manchester

DAF SB3000/Ikarus C53F R115 GNW has been acquired from Eastbourne Buses.

Gordon, Rotherham

Ex-Sheffield Community Transport Bova Futura FHD12/C40Ft P688 AUG is in stock.

Volvo B10M/Plaxton Panther B14 WGS is the team coach for Sheffield Wednesday FC and Sheffield United FC. Eos 230 R5 HMC is used as team coach by Barnsley FC. Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur K19 FTG has gone to Yorkshire Rose, Barnsley.

Halifax Joint Committee

MCW Metrobus 10 (C424 BUV) is back in service after a period with Jones, Llanerchymedd. Metrobus 17 has lost Asda green/white for standard fleet livery.

Happy Al's, Birkenhead

Following upper deck fire damage, former Cardiff Leyland Olympian/East Lancs C561 GWO is likely to be withdrawn. Ex-Kenneally, Waterford Volvo Olympian T241 KDM (99 WD 11), illustrated in September Fleet News, has been converted to single-door.

Harrogate & District BL

Former service X43 Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President DPH43/28F 2704/5/8/9/11 (Y704 HRN etc) have come from Burnley & Pendle.

Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties 2953/7/8 (S53 VNM etc) have been transferred to Keighley & District. Ex-Sovereign Green Line Volvo B10M/Plaxton coaches 301/17/8 (KE51 WUO, P317/8 RGS) have been stored at Starbeck and advertised for sale.

Hills, Wolverhampton

The second new coach for 2005 is Volvo B12M/Berkhof Axial FJ05 APF.

Hilton, Newton-le-Willows

Rare Ward Dalesman C12-640/Van Hool Alizée H C48Ft OIL 5269 is ex-Bennett, Warrington. It was new to Wrigley, Irlam as 26 GNW, passing later to Millman,

Below: Huntingdon & District T126 AUA, one of three Optare Spectra-bodied DAF DB250s still in former operator London Sovereign's red, leaving Drummer Street bus station, Cambridge. These are from a batch new to Capital Logistics for London route 60. **GRAHAME BESSEY**



Above: Recently transferred between Blazefield fleets, Keighley & District 2703 (Y703 HRN) is a Plaxton President-bodied Volvo B7TL new to Burnley & Pendle for its X43 service. **DANIEL STAZICKER**

Padgate. Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool Alizée H D547/52 MVR are ex-Stagecoach East Midland.

Minibuses M563 SRE and L744 TFY are not owned by Hilton, but were stored here.

Hornsby, Ashby, Lincs

Leyland Olympian1/Alexander (Belfast) RH H479 PVW (DMN 18R, 90 D 1018) has been acquired from Isle of Man Transport, but was originally Dublin Bus RH18.

HTL, Huyton, Merseyside

Optare Solos W286/7/93, 301/4 EYG were acquired ex-HAD, Shotts, in April.

Huggins, Wallasey

Ex-Travel West Midlands coach-seated MCW Metrobus D913 NDA is here, re-registered YCZ 8663.

Huntingdon & District

Parent company Cavalier has transferred Dennis Trident/Plaxton President AE51 VFW and Mercedes Vario O814D/Frank Guy X441 WAU here. Ex-London Sovereign DAF DB250/Optare Spectras T126/8/9 AUA are on hire with an option to purchase. North West Conversions, Blackburn converted them to single-door layout before delivery.

Islwyn Borough Transport

Three Bova Futura FHD12-290/C51Ft acquired from Johnson, Henley in Arden for the Kingfisher coach fleet are B11-3 JCT (G997 OVA, G420 WFP, G171 YDX).

Volvo B10M-62 coaches 88/9 (P182 NAK, R979 PRD) have been re-registered YIL 4360 and 8340 respectively.

Johnson, Hodthorpe, Notts

In September, the Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society noted that the following Bristol VRTs were still owned, though several are delicensed and out of use. **VRT/SLs** NGM 168G, OSF 305/7G; **VRT/SL2s** MPG 226L, OWR 552M, PKE 810M, HWE 826N, HTU 155/9N, JWL 993/7N; **VRT/SL3s** KKY 835P, OWE 854/7/8R, ODL 661-4R, PTT 98R, RCH 155R, RWA 859R, RWT 544/6R, RYG 386R, TDT 864S, UDL 668S, MIW 2422, WTG 364T, YDL 676T, FDL 677/9/80V, KTL 24/7V, LVL 804/7/9V, PFE 540/1/4V, HWJ 925W, LAK 935W, SVL 177-80W and MWG 940X.

Keighley & District BL

Ex-Sovereign London Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B36F 848 (V548 JBH), has been converted to single door, retrimmed, fitted with an LED destination display and repainted into Zone livery. In from Harrogate & District and repainted as yellow schoolbuses are Volvo Olympian YV3YNA/Northern Counties H43/29F 953/7/8 (S53 VNM etc).

The first of two Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President DPH43/28F expected from Burnley & Pendle is 2703 (Y703 HRN). Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer driver trainer T550 (V550 JBH) is on loan from Lancashire United.

Volvo B10B-58/Alexander Strider 503 (N503 HWY), withdrawn and stored since April, is being transferred to Burnley & Pendle along with 505 (N505 HWY).

Kimes, Folkingham, Lincs

The Optare Excel noted last month, P201 BNR, has been re-registered WAZ 8276 and numbered 76. Another ex-Trent Barton Excel is P151 CTV.

Kinchbus WG

Trent Barton Optare Excel 236 (X236 WRA) is on loan. Mercedes-Benz minibus 49 (R49 SCH) is also here, still in Connect 1 livery.

Leyland Titan 771 (WYV 53T) has been sold to local coach operator JB Tours.

Leicestershire County Council

The newest addition to the five-vehicle schoolbus fleet is YN55 KMU, a new Volvo B7R/Plaxton Profile DP70FI.

Lewis, Coventry

Withdrawn Leyland National Greenway WIL 6536 (GUW 473W) and Bristol VR/ECW WTU 479W remain *in situ*, the latter six months after last use.

Limburg Touring, Sheffield

Two re-registered Leyland Olympians, 75/6 (OUI 6275/6), are understood to have been GRH 3Y and JTY 401X, though not necessarily in that order. Neoplan Skyliner SXI 3630 is here from BK European, Wolverhampton.



GROUP CODES

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FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group

London Central/London General GA

LOTS reports that the new Wright Electrociti hybrid buses are imminent; they are WHY1-6 (LX55 EAA/C/E-G/J). A further 62 Volvo B7TL/Wright Eclipse Geminis are on order in addition to the 15 Alexander Dennis Enviro400s reported last month.

London United TD

Route 13 (Aldwych-Golders Green) remained wholly Routemaster-operated until 15 October, but Scania OmniDekkas of the SLE21-42 batch began to appear on 18 October, before final demise of the Routemasters on 21 October.

Longstaff, Mirfield, W Yorks

Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 V56 SVY (V3 JLL) has passed to Thames Travel, Wallingford.

Low Fell, Gateshead

A recent acquisition is Dennis Dart SLF/UVG UrbanStar B42F P844 KOT.

M Travel, Normanton, W Yorks

Another MkII MCW Metrobus from Travel West Midlands is POG 607Y, bringing the total to 10: POG 496/97, 607Y, ROX 629/39Y, A692, 862 UOE, A105/9 WVP and B877 DOM. All except POG 607Y and ROX 629Y are in M Travel green/white/red and yellow. Also in fleet livery is the final fleet member, F702 ECC, a DAF SB220/Optare Delta ex-Arriva North East but new to Crosville Wales.

Thanks go to transport manager Anthony Dee for this update.

Malcolm's Bus Service, Clacton

K634/40 GVX are Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver minibuses not Leyland Olympians (Fleet News, October).

Marshall, Sutton-on-Trent, Notts

A new minicoach here is IC71 (YN05 UGO), an Irisbus 100E60/Indcar Maxim.

MASS, North Anston

The Leyland Olympian/Alexander tri-axes that stayed behind at Lincoln in May following the sale of those operations to Dunn-Line have returned home.

A mass clear out of redundant Leylands has seen Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) take Titans CUL 74V, KYV 320, 527/367/43X, NUW 579, 625/7/50Y, A836/8/62 SUL, A917/34 SYE, B115 WUV, Lynx F883 SMU and Nationals LUP 894T, UPT 667/74V, FTN 704W for scrap, along with Volvo B10M/Van Hool BAZ 7049 (G849 RNC) and Optare MetroRider N812 XOJ.

Metrobus GA

Dennis Darts 722/3 (M722/3 CGO) have been sold to Network Colchester. Leyland Olympian 804 (G804 SMV) has been withdrawn.

Metroline DG

Use of the Alexander Dennis-owned TransBus Enviro200 demonstrator on route 274 started during the week of 19 September, operating as an extra, subject to driver and vehicle availability.

AEC-engined (and still bulb-lit) AEC/Park Royal Routemaster RML903 (WLT 903) returned to the road on 18 September following repaint and refurbishment work when it appeared at EFE Showbus International. Further work is planned on it, as resources allow, to return it to near original condition. It is the only Routemaster left here and was one of just two RMLs not put through the standard refurbishment programme in order to retain original features — Stagecoach RML2760 (SMK 760F) was the other.

MK Metro

81/2 (YN55 PZY/Z) are the first of eight Scania L94UB/Wright Solar B43F for core cross-Milton Keynes route 5. They wear the new orange livery with dark blue skirt that is steadily replacing the previous yellow/blue scheme.

Tellings-Golden Miller Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 906 (W906 UJM) is in service here, still in Solent Clipper livery. MK Metro owner Julian Peddle also is a TGM shareholder.

Also acquired is Mercedes-Benz Vario O810D/Plaxton Beaver 2 B31F R828 WBC from Trent Barton.

Moxon, Oldcotes, Notts

A fifth ex-Yorkshire Traction ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian is A641 WDT, rejoining A630/1 WDT, B661



Above: A692 UOE is one of 10 ex-Travel West Midlands MCW Metrobus MkIIs in the M Travel fleet.
DAVID LONGBOTTOM

CET and C671 GET. Bova Futura Y662 HWY has been sold to Stacey, Carlisle, but M9 XON (Y661 HWY) remains in stock.

National Express NX

New are Scania K124/Irizar PB NXL28, 30/2 (YN55 NDO/V/Z).

Network Colchester TGM

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B35F 302/3 (M722/3 CGO) are acquisitions from Metrobus. Ex-Tellings-Golden Miller Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 DP44F W901/27 UJM are numbered 381/2/7.

Still retaining Arriva livery in early-September were Dennis Dart/East Lancs 306/8/13, Dart/Plaxton 316, Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 317, B6/Alexander 318/9, Volvo B10M/East Lancs 333-5/7, Leyland Lynxes 351-3/6/7, DAF SB220/Ikarus 358/9 and Mercedes-Benz Vario/Plaxton Beavers 373/4. 359 (K124 TCP) is primarily a driver trainer but remains PSV-licensed.

Newbury, Ledbury

A new Volvo B12M/Plaxton is VX05 MXC.

Norfolk Green, King's Lynn

A recent addition is B23F Optare Solo 614 (W299 EYG) in white. Business success has led to an additional Norwich depot, based at Anson Road, Airport Industrial Estate.

North Birmingham Busways, Erdington

The most recent acquisition is Dennis/Plaxton Super Pointer Dart B40F 46 (S496 MCC, S1 EMS) from Express Motors, Bontnewydd. Its registration came from a Mercedes-Benz Vario in its former owner's fleet.

Leyland Atlantean 53 (BNC 953T) is in reserve at Wood Lane depot, while 43 (ANA 543Y) has gone to Wigley, Carlton (dealer) for scrap. Similar 72 (A702 LNC) has been converted to a National Health Service exhibition and recruitment vehicle.

Nottingham City Transport

The last Dennis Arrow, 401 (N401 ARA), has been withdrawn, as have Volvo Olympians 471/83/4 (R471/83/4 RRA). Scania N113DRB/East Lancs 351-3 (L351-3 MRR) have gone to TM Travel, Chesterfield.

Notts & Derby WG

Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma 357 (N357 VRC) has gone to TM Travel, Chesterfield.

Nu Venture, Aylesford, Kent

The BMC 1100FE/B55FL schoolbuses, 811-3 (LK55 ABU/V/X), were supplied by First Student and are thought to be the first of their type rented outside FirstGroup. They are in First Student livery, with First logos. Medway Council and Nu-Venture logos are to be added.

Dennis Dart SLF/Caetano Compass B44F 446 (Y446 HRV) is in stock here from Alexcars, Cirencester; this has been previously quoted as a Caetano Nimbus body.

Ogden, St Helens

A new trading name of Ogdenbus has been introduced for Merseytravel contracts taken over since the demise of Norbus. Leyland Tiger/East Lancs AAX 520A is here

Olympian, Harlow

The last ex-Stort Valley vehicle here is Volvo B10M/Plaxton Paramount MIL 1853. Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount NIW 4810, Tiger/Berkhof B589 HFE and Setra S215 MJI 7857 have been sold to Mulley, Ixworth for cannibalisation.

Scania K92/Plaxton Premiere AHZ 7344 is withdrawn, along with Van Hool T815 NIL 2993 and Tiger/Plaxton Paramount J882 YKY. Iveco 59.12/Marshall M159 RBH has gone to the associated SM Travel fleet.

Oxford Bus Company GA

The vehicle requirement has been reduced following completion of roadworks for a traffic-calming scheme in Cowley Road. As a result Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde 606/28 (N606 NJO, N416 NRG) have gone to Wilts & Dorset while former London General B10B/Northern Counties Paladin 656 (K130 BUD) is being converted to single-door for transfer to Solent Blue Line.

Several coaches are in store for the winter timetable, and Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur 70/1 (R809/8 NUD are on loan to Solent Blue Line while similar 9, 10, 12 (R9, 10/2 OXF) have been withdrawn.

Ex-Travel West Midlands Leyland Lynx training bus 972 (C66 HOM) has been sold to Wootten, Chesham.

Parkway, Sheffield

Bedford YNT/Caetano Algarve TIW 2366 has been exported to Africa. Caetano-bodied Iveco D842 CNV and Bova Europa AAZ 9091 have gone for scrap.

PC Coaches, Lincoln

Another Scania here is East Lancs-bodied N112 C29 ETG, latterly with Black Prince, Morley

People's Bus, Walton, Merseyside

Acquired MCW Metrobus MkII E746 SKR has been repainted in blue and magenta.

Pegasus, Guiseley, W Yorks

Ex-Bebb, Llantwit Fardre Optare Solo M850/B29F W82 NDW has been acquired.

Philips, South Woodham Ferrers, Essex

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Optare Nouvelle FX03 GKP is in use here.

Plymouth Citybus

The PSV Circle reports that the either Mercedes-Benz Citaros were expected in service in November as 80-7 (WJ55 HLG/H/K/M-P/R).

Poppleton, Pontefract

An arson attack has claimed MCW Metrobus B271 WUL, Leyland Lynx F401 PUR, a Leyland Tiger coach and one other (as yet unidentified) double-decker.

Replacements are ex-Stagecoach Leyland Titan TNLXB2RR/Leyland H44/29F A945 SYE, Dennis Dominator DD1009/Northern Counties H43/31F C219/22 WAJ and, from Hornsby, Ashby, DAF SB220LC/Ikarus DP42F L512/3 KJX.

Pullman, Penclawdd

Ex-Wallace Arnold Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere Mistral C53F P354 VWR is in stock.

Reading Transport

Reading Transport is showing considerable interest in First's 'ftr' bus rapid transit concept. Successful trials were conducted with First London Mercedes-Benz Citaro EA11001 (LK53 FAA) on 31 August to test the ease with which articulated buses could negotiate the streets and corners in Reading town centre ahead of the plans to bring 'ftr' to Reading. First's prototype Wright StreetCar came to Reading on 5/6 October. It was operated by Reading Transport and garaged at its Great Knollys Street premises. After posing for photographs on the first day and shuttling delegates to/from a conference on the second day, it operated between the railway station and Reading's Old Town Hall on trade plate 339 RZ. The conference, organised by Reading Borough Council, focused on recent achievements and future developments, together with improvements to the infrastructure, transport especially.

The reference last month to Scania OmniDekka 818 (YN55 NJZ) was slightly premature; it did not enter service until November.

With a reduction in the work being undertaken by Newbury Buses on behalf of Vodafone from 26 September, Optare Excel 941 (V941 DCF) has returned to the leasing company, and Optare Solo 109 (V109 DCF) has moved on to Newbury local services.

Accident damaged DAF DB250/Optare Spectra 703 (K703 BBL) was sold to Ensign, Purfleet (dealer) towards the end of September. Spectra 739 (YG02 FWC) was deroofed in Staines on a rail replacement service in October.

Optare MetroRider 626 (M930 TYG) was sold during October to The Deliverance Centre, Reading, for non-PSV use.

Reay, Wigton, Cumbria

Acquired from Ferguson, Carlisle for is PRN 761, an all-Leyland Titan PD2 rebuilt by Preston Corporation to 30ft long PD3/6 standard and H38/32F layout. For normal service is high-specification Bova Futura FHD12-370/C29Ft W953 LDN (OXK 76, B11 TFC) from Hilton, Newton-le-Willows.

Red Kite, St Helens

Mercedes-Benz O405/Optare Prisma N577 EUG, P441 SWX and R202 YOR have been snapped up from Black Prince, Morley, the last new to Tillingbourne, Cranleigh.

Regal Busways, Chelmsford

A notable addition to this fleet is 701 (AE55 EHM), the first of a batch of ten 10.8m Alexander Dennis Darts that Marshall successor MCV has built for a range of customers. It is also the first MCV bus with Lazerini Practico seating. Although its first bodies were on TransBus Darts for Warrington, all subsequent MCV production has been on MAN chassis.

Road Car YT

Six more Volvo B7TL double-deckers are on order, but in a break with past practice they will have Wright Eclipse Gemini bodies.

Managing director Paul Hill kindly advises that the latest three B7TLs, East Lancs Vyking DPs 918-20 (FX55 AZU-W), are on Grimsby service 16 (Asda superstore-Wybers Way) and not the Lincoln-Skegness route as reported earlier. They sport a double-deck version of the revised yellow/blue/red Super Buzz livery, 918/9 being branded for the 16, and bring the B7TL tally to 20.

Four Mercedes-Benz O405/Optare Prisma B49F acquired from Black Prince, Morley comprise 201/2 (S901/2 DUB), which have already arrived at Road Car, and 203/4 (R203 YOR, TIL 7901 R201 YOR), which Yorkshire Traction is repainting into Road Car livery. The last two were new to Tillingbourne.

Further arrivals from within Traction Group are DAF SB220LC/Optare Delta B48F 246/54/60 (K346/4 FAL, G600 NRC) from Barnsley & District, and Volvo B6R/Alexander Dash B40F 330/1/3/34 (K270/1/3 ERM, J704 BRM) from Yorkshire Terrier.

Rossendale Transport

Unexpected purchases are of three ex-2 Travel, Pentrechwyth MAN 14.220/MCV Stirling single-deckers CU04 AMX, AOP, AUV. They will be numbered 158-60 are likely to be used mainly on peak hour school/day workings, but will likely venture on to other services, probably from Rochdale depot. They will replace three of the ex-Lothian Lynx 2s, which will be too old for Greater Manchester PTE contracts by next summer.

Bova Futura Club 366 (R466 GUA) has been transferred to Rawtenstall depot to replace ex-Ministry of Defence Volvo B10M/Plaxton Derwent 67 (G727 JJC) on schools and swimming baths work; 67 has become an all-red driver trainer, allowing Leyland Tiger/East Lancs EL2000 reboddy 74 (PJ1 9174) to be withdrawn.

Ex-Brighton Leyland Lynxes 194/6 (G994/6 VVV) are withdrawn and are likely to be sold.

Rubicon, Bristol

Ex-Badgerline employee Warwick Hulme's Rubicon Classic Travel has operated the Bristol open-top tour since 1993, using vehicles hired from Chepstow Classic Buses, beginning with Bristol Lodekka FLF6B 841 SHW. Now vehicles are hired from City Sightseeing's Bath Bus Company, in recent times including MCW Metrobus A931 SUL, with Leyland Titan WYV 26T as the regular extra.

Rubicon owns and operates ex-Devon General convertible 1961 Leyland Atlantean/Metro-Cammell 'Sea Dog' 931 GTA, one of the oldest Atlanteans left in service anywhere. Its Launa Windows 'Unibus' advertisement — synonymous with Devon General vehicles and which it carried in the 1970s — has been reinstated.

Sanders, Holt, Norfolk

Now in schoolbus yellow are Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver N44 SCS and DAF SB220/Ikarus T793 TWX.

Semmence, Wymondham

Two Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C53F acquired from Matthews, Shouldham are G454 PGO and H177 EJU.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

DAF/Van Hool PIL 2388, Volvo B10M/Ikarus F193 TNP and ex-2 Travel Dennis Dart/Carlyle H108 MOB have passed to EST, Llandow.

Shearings-Wallace Arnold

The first order for this combined operation calls for 20 new Volvo B12Ms, 10 Plaxton Panthers and 10 Van Hool Alicrons, for 2006. Five of the Plaxtons will be to high-spec C36Ft as WA-style Grand Tourers and five as C42Ft Shearings-style Premier Class.

Sheffield Community Transport

New service 10 brought a pressing need for low-floor vehicles, so Barnsley Community Transport Optare Solo YJ51 XSP was borrowed until new, all-over white Solo

MV05 OTS arrived. Bova Futura P688 AUG has passed to Gordon, Rotherham. Optare Aleros YN04 XSJ/K, LWY are in store at Woodsetts Bus Deliveries, Dinnington and YN04 ZSL has been advertised for sale.

Shorey, Maulden, Beds

Former Reading MCW Metrobus LMO 193X has replaced ex-Lothian ECW-bodied Leyland Olympian A726 YFS.

Silcox, Pembroke Dock

Volvo B10M/Alexander P-type DP53F D106/9 GHY have been acquired from First Somerset & Avon; they were new to Badgerline.

SM Travel, Harlow

Irisbus Scolabus/Vehixel FD54 EOO is in use here. An acquisition is Iveco 59.12/Marshall M291 AJC, while MAN 11.190/Optare Vecta K805 DCF has moved on to Driving Ambition, London.

Solent Blue Line GA

Former London General Volvo B10B/Northern Counties Paladin K130 BUD is due shortly from Oxford Bus Company, following conversion to single-door. Oxford Bus Company Airline Volvo B10M/Plaxton Excalibur C53F 70/1 (R809/8 NUD) are on loan for the Solent Shuttle; Volvo Olympians 735/6 used so far have not proved sufficiently reliable. Oxford Airline livery is similar to the blue/yellow Solent Shuttle livery.

Though having been advertised in teasers on the TransBus Mini Pointer Darts in Eastleigh as 16 November, the launch date for Eastleigh's Red Rockets has been put back until 9 January and vinyls on the MPDs have been changed accordingly.

Thamesdown Dennis Dart 130 (XBZ 7730, M409 XTC, MAN 15D) returned to Swindon for mechanical attention and 128 (N128 LMW) is on loan here instead.

Stacey, Carlisle

Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D/Plaxton C31F V145 ESF is an acquisition from McQueen, Garelochhead.

Stagecoach Cambridgeshire ST

New at Cambridge are Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H47/28F 18335-41/3/5/7-9 (AE55 DJU/V/X-Z, DKA/D/J/N/U/V/X) with Citi branding.

Stagecoach East ST

The last ex-United Counties Leyland Olympian/ECW, 14005 (ARP 605X), has been withdrawn. It is in the reserve fleet, but is unlikely to be used again.

Four B37F Dennis Darts have been supplied by Bedfordshire County Council for Bedford Park-&-Ride; they are understood to be 33181-4 (VX51 RBZ, RCU/F, RBY).

Stagecoach East Midlands ST

All five Optare Excels in the Stagecoach Merseyside fleet have come here. They are B36F 35018-20 (P222, 333, R11 ABC) and B32F 35021/2 (R641/3 RBV).

Below: As reported in September Fleet News, East Lancs Millennium Lowlander-bodied VDL DB250 is the first new double-decker for Norfolk independent Sanders of Holt. GEOFF MILLS



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group



Top left: Among the more unusual vehicles transferred into the Stagecoach Merseyside fleet after Stagecoach took over Glenvale Transport was 30342 (N416 KPS), a Wright Crusader-bodied Volvo B6LE. It was built originally for service in Shetland and joined Stagecoach when it took over Docherty's bus routes in Ayrshire last year. Also visible is an ex-Glenvale Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220 with Stagecoach fleetname sticker. **DAVID LONGBOTTOM**



Below left: Still in Glenvale red but with Stagecoach fleetnames and fleet number is Alexander Strider-bodied Volvo B10B 21005 (M391 VWX). It was new to Blazefield's Harrogate & District fleet. **DAVID LONGBOTTOM**

Stagecoach London ST

Further Alexander Dennis Trident ALX400 H45/22D are 18455-69 (LX55 EPA/C-F/J-L/N-P/U/V/Y/Z). At least some of these have large SGC-prefixed fleetnumbers with on their roofs.

Stagecoach Manchester ST

New are Alexander-Dennis Trident ALX400s 18350-66 (MX55 KOU/VW, KPA/E-G/J-L/N-P/R/T/U/V). Also here is three-axle Leyland Olympian 13628, still with Hong Kong registration FJ 4674, for use as a Magic Bus with a UK registration.

Volvo B10M/Alexander PS-type 20713 (K713 DAO) B49F has been on loan briefly at Glossop from Stagecoach North West. Glossop-based ex-Dennis's Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer 33090 (R573 ABA) is in reserve with fire damage.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds40434, 40660/3-5 (N884 AVV, N660/3-5 VSS) have been withdrawn.

Stagecoach Merseyside ST

Further new Alexander Dennis Pointer Darts are 34743-51 (PX55 EDK/L/O/P/R/U/V, EEA/B), while there are four ex-Stagecoach North West Carlisle flood victim Darts here, 34473/4/7/8 (PX53 DJV/Y, DKD/E), with

FLEET IN FOCUS

FLEET:	Eric W. Bowers Ltd, trading as Bowers Coaches
BASED:	Aspincroft Garage, Town End, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire.
WEBSITE:	www.bowerscoaches.co.uk
FOUNDED:	Eric Bowers ran a motorcycle business in Chapel-en-le Frith in 1952, when he took a liking to a 29-seat Bedford OB coach that often parked near the back of the garage. He had a word one day with the driver, who said that he thought the owner wanted to sell it, and by teatime the coach business was born. This remains a family firm run by Mike Bowers from the same site, and grew with the acquisition of Park Hire of Chapel-en-le-Frith, Ladybower Coaches and Stones Travel.
WHERE DOES IT OPERATE?:	Started running buses on contract to Derbyshire County Council in the 1980s, and was one of the first to introduce low floor buses on this work. Today it operates around 16 bus routes and some schools services in the High Peak area, with most operations centred on Buxton and reaching out as far as Marple, Glossop, Macclesfield, Leek, Ashbourne, Bakewell and Castleton. Town services in Buxton, New Mills and Chapel-en-le-Frith. The company made a positive swing towards bus work last year, by disposing of six of its 10 coaches.
LIVERY:	Buses are red with yellow and white lining and lettering. One Leyland National remains in turquoise/white/grey Unibus livery. Coaches are usually white with blue and turquoise fleetnames.
HOW MANY VEHICLES?:	Twenty-one buses, and four coaches. Buses comprise seven Mercedes-Benz minibuses with bodywork mainly by Plaxton, eight Optare Solos, bought new, two Dennis Lances and four Volvo-powered Leyland Nationals acquired from Trent. Bedfords gave way to Ford coaches, which in turn were replaced by AEC Reliances, and now three Scania are operated — one with Van Hool body and two Irizar — along with a Setra S250 integral. No double-deckers (bus or coach) have ever been owned.
NEWEST VEHICLE:	The third Optare SlimLine Solo, delivered this year in July is YJ05 MXU.
MOST INTERESTING VEHICLE?:	Mike Bowers says that the company operated a Guy Vixen and a halfcab Dennis, as well as a Commer TS3. He liked the narrow-bodied Bedford SB/Plaxton (registration number FDS 4) that served as a driver trainer for many years.

Below: Van Hool-bodied Scania K113CRB coach B3 WER was new to Fenn Holidays of March. **ANDREW JAROSZ**



Below: Bowers N359 VRC, an Optare Sigma-bodied Dennis Lance new to Trent, at Hayfield in June this year. **JOHN YOUNG**



three more to come. To summarise, the Leyland Olympians transferred from other Stagecoach companies are ex-Stagecoach East 14045/6/8/9 (G645 EVV etc), ex-Stagecoach Transit 14180/1/3/5 (G180 JHG etc) and from Stagecoach South East 14988 (K235 NHC), together with Volvo B10M/Northern Counties Paladin 20601-5 (L601-3 VCD, L424/5 TJK). Volvo B10M/Alexander PSs here are 20418/9, 20661, 20720 (H618/9 ACK, K791/20 DAO) from East Midlands, 20700-2/25/48/9 (K700 DAO etc) from North West and 20921/31/4/80 (R921 XVM etc) from Manchester. Ex-Stagecoach Western Volvo B6LE 30342 (N416 KPS) is still here, as is ex-Fife B6/Alexander 30652 (L652 KHS), but other Fife B6s 30659/70-2 (L659 HKS, M670-2 SSX) have gone into store with Stagecoach North West at Lillyhall. The former ABC Optare Excels, 35018-22 (P222, 333, R11 ABC, R641/3 RBV), have joined most of Stagecoach's other Excels at East Midland.

Major withdrawals of Leyland Titans have started, with 10045/6/73 (WYV 45/6T, CUL 73V), 10446/99 (KYV 446/99X), 10624/8/92/8, 10730 (NUW 624/8Y, OHV 692/8, 730Y), 10821/63/8/84 (RYK 821Y, A863/8/84 SUL), 11003/42 (A603/42 THV); 10073, 10698, 11003 have gone to Stagecoach North West. Also withdrawn are MCW Metrobus 15924 (OJD 818Y), Volvo B6s 30938/49 (L452 LWA, L703 FWO) and Dennis Darts 32023/5, 32172 (H541/5 XGK, K575 MGT).

Stagecoach North East ST

Busways Scania N113DRB/Alexander H47/31F 15301-9 (H421-9 BNL) have been transferred to Stagecoach Fife.

Stagecoach North West ST

TransBus Pointer Dart 34580 (PX04 DSE) is the first refurbished Carlisle flood victim to re-enter service here, at Lillyhall. It's the first low-floor vehicle in west Cumbria.

Three former GTL Leyland Titans have been transferred from Stagecoach Merseyside; they are 10073, 10698, 11003 (CUL 73V, OHV 698Y, A603 THV), while Merseyside ex-Fife Volvo B6s 30659/70-2 (L659 HKS, M670-2 SSX) are in store at Lillyhall.

Mercedes-Benz 709D 40447 (N467 VOD) has become a staff shuttle while 40039 (K876 GHH) and Volvo B6/Plaxton Pointer 30726 (M76 HHH) are withdrawn.

Bristol VRT/SL3 15731 (PHH 149W, KRM 431W) is still active, operating service 2 (Southport-Preston) in September.

Stagecoach South East ST

An additional vehicle for the Triangle-branded routes in East Kent is Alexander Dennis Trident/ALX400 H47/28F 18331 (GX55 DXL). Transferred to Stagecoach Merseyside are Leyland Olympian 14988 (K235 NHC) and Volvo B10M/Northern Counties Paladins 20601-5 (L601-3 VCD, L424/5 TJK). Also being transferred there is registration VKB 708 from former Heysham Travel Volvo B10M/Van Hool coach 52002, which reverts to original registration B483 UNB. VKB 708 was originally on Liverpool Corporation Leyland PD2 L252.

Ancillary Leyland Leopard/Plaxton Supreme 25710 (ETC 310W) has been sold to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer), accident damaged Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32510 (J510 GCD) has been sold to Emsworth & District and vandalised Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander Sprint 40950 (N950 NAP) has been written off by Norwich Union Insurance.

Stagecoach Warwickshire ST

Greenbus.org-liveried ex-Manchester tri-axle Leyland Olympian H603 LNA is numbered 13651.

Stagecoach West ST

Two Optare Solos are on order for November delivery to Cheltenham District.

Scheduled Megabus duties ended in Swindon early in September. Swindon & District's remaining Megabus, Leyland Olympian 13601 (BIW 4977), is allocated purely to cover breakdowns along the M4 corridor.

Right: Travel A22 L208 YAG, the Walsall company's ex-Stagecoach Dennis Lance with Plaxton Verde body, on a rail replacement contract.

BEN MORROLL

Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash 32313 (N313 AMC) moved from Swindon & District to Cheltenham District in August for temporary use training 13 drivers from Poland. It then moved to Cheltenham & Gloucester where it was reinstated as a PSV.

Vehicles placed into reserve are delicensed Cheltenham & Gloucester Volvo B6 30709 (L709 FWO) and licensed Mercedes-Benz 711D 41152/9/71 (N152/9 MTG, P171 TNY). Leyland Tiger driver trainer 59001 (OWO 37X) has again been delicensed.

Withdrawn are Cheltenham & Gloucester 1993 Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall 41330 (L330 CHB), 41803-6 (L803-6 XDG).

An unusual repaint into current livery is Iveco/Mellor runaround (former minibus) 46607 (R607 KDD).

Star, Bilston, W Midlands

H117 MOB is another ex—Rossendale Dennis Dart/Carlyle Dartline.

Stephenson, Rochford, Essex

The new Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart is EU05 CZA, initially used as a demonstrator with Norfolk Green.

Following the collapse of Supreme, Hadleigh, King Edmunds school contracts have been taken over. Double-deckers used on schools now have 16-camera closed circuit television (with sound) and 10 are required for King Edmunds work.

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer K716 KGU is in livery as a Stephenson's/Excel pool vehicle based at Maldon.

ECW-bodied Bristol VRT/SL3 open-topper UWV 618S, the last Bristol at work in the Southend area, has been sold to a buyer in the United States. Leyland Olympian/ECW A234 GHN has gone for scrap and DBV 136Y to Fargo, Rayne.

Stratford Blue EB

Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer B28F H539 XGK (92 G 6938) has been acquired from City Direct of Knocknamarra, Galway for spares

Sun Decker Tours, Lydney

Ex-Reading MCW Metrobus A146 AMO is owned.

Supertravel, Speke

New are Optare Solos MX55 BYC/D.

Supreme, Hadleigh, Essex

Colchester depot was vacated in early September.

Remaining vehicles are at Southend, Chandlers Way.

Various vehicles remain in use in Supreme livery, or with Supreme lettering painted out. MCW Metrobus LOA 337X, Scania K113/Irizar M259 TAK and Volvo B10M/Plaxton K659 BOH (K3 CEN) have been sold.

Swift Taxis, Great Yarmouth

The first full-sized vehicle here is DAF SB220/lkarus T826 GSE, for a school contract.

Talisman, Great Bromley, Essex

Ex-Dublin Bus Leyland Olympian/Alexander H643 PTW (90 D 1057) is back in use after roof repairs.

Tappins, Didcot

An unusual new addition for City Sightseeing, Oxford, is a partial open-top Volvo B7TL/East Lancs, PO55 NXU.

Unusually the enclosed front section upstairs has a rear door to create an enclosed area so the bus can also be used on schools work.

Tellings-Golden Miller TGM

Volvo B10BLE/Alexander ALX300 906 (W906 UJM) has gone to MK Metro; we await reports of 905/7.

Thames Travel, Wallingford

Mercedes-Benz 616CDi/Mellor B25F 305 (OU05 LWP) is new, although the finisher of its bodywork is unclear and may, in fact, have been Koch.

TM Travel, Chesterfield

Alexander Dennis Super Dart/East Lancs Mylennium B41F YT55 TMT has arrived, as illustrated last month.

Further secondhand acquisitions are ex-Nottingham Scania N113DRB/East Lancs H49/35F L351-3 MRR and ex-Arriva London Leyland Olympian/Northern Counties G531/2 VBB, new to Kentish Bus. Ex-Notts & Derby Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma B46F N357 VRC is in service in N&D livery.

Dennis Dart (R554 UOT) has sustained accident damage and is out of use. Leyland Titan OHV 806Y, MCW Metrobuses OJD 828Y, A984 XYF, B192, 230 WUL and C330 BUV have been sold to Speedwell, Glossop, and Volvo B10M/Plaxton L4 TCC has gone to McCauntley, Co Down. Volvo B10M coaches L927 NWN and M127 UWY have been sold to Coniston Coaches, Stourport, Optare MetroRiders H157 UUA and L839 MWT to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

In 10 years, this progressive operator has become Derbyshire's largest independent operator.

Town & Country, Thurrock

It's good to see the return to good health of 52-year old ECW-bodied Bristol KSW5G KSW480 (WNO 480), the former Eastern National 2384. Town & Country uses it for private charters and special events and has repainted it smartly in reversed livery of light blue with dark blue centre band, wings and radiator. It has been fully re-floored and retrimmed with waterproof upholstery on Olympian-style wide seating. It fell into dereliction in open storage with First Essex at Clacton following engine failure and had a spell with a Rochford-based preservationist before purchase here.

Travel A22, Walsall

This operator of rail replacement services and bus route 529 (Walsall-Wolverhampton), has acquired ex-Stagecoach North West Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde L208 YAG, one of the buses written off in the Carlisle flooding in January.

Travel London NX

More Optare Solos to go to Travel West Midlands are S234/6/7 (S234/6/7 EWU). S231/3 are at Byfleet, standing in for former Tellings-Golden Miller Mercedes-Benz Varios and looking incongruous with lettering for service C1 (Kensington-Victoria).

TransBus Mini Pointer Darts DP1-12 (YT51 DZY/Z, EAA/C/E-G/J/K/M/O/P) are being returned to Dawsonrentals off lease, though five are to move to Flights Hallmark, which took over some former TGM services from Travel London.

GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

BL

Blazefield
Holdings

DG

Comfort
Delgro

EB

Ensignbus

EY

EYMS
Group

FG

FirstGroup

GA

Go-Ahead
Group

NX

National
Express
Group

ST

Stagecoach
Group

TD

Transdev

TGM

Tellings -
Golden
Miller

WG

Wellglade
Group

YT

Traction
Group



Travel West Midlands NX

The Optare Solos from Travel London are B26F 3232/4-40 (S232 EWU) etc for Pensnett.

The other two Volvo B6LE/Wright Crusaders transferred to Travel Dundee are 521/31 (P521/31 EJW).

Withdrawn are Leyland Lynxes 1087/90, 1108/38/78/88/97, 1207/33/94 (G87 EOG etc) and MCW Metrobuses 2763/7, 2838/9 (A763/7 WVP, B838/9 AOP). Volvo B7TL/Plaxton President 4076 (V76 MOA) is in reserve. Lynx 1212 (G212 EOG) and Metrobuses 2575 and 2601/98 (POG 575, 601Y, A698 UOE) have been sold.

Trent Barton WG

Former Rainbow 4 Optare Excels 254-7 (Y254/71/56/7 DRC) have been repainted pink and purple for the new Pronto service operated jointly with Stagecoach. The rest of this batch of Excels will replace older examples on Skyline route 199 (Buxton-Manchester Airport). Rainbow 5 Excels 156-8 (S156-8 UAL) have been extensively refurbished for the revamped Nottingham-Manchester TransPeak service.

Another Excel to join the Notts & Derby fleet is 152 (P152 CTV), in standard N&D livery.

Excels 149/51 (P201 BNR, P151 CTV) have been sold to Kimes, Folkingham, Mercedes-Benz 811D 272 (M272 URC) to Fleetlink (dealer) and Dennis Lance/Optare Sigma 357 (N357 VRC) to TM Travel, Chesterfield.

Truronian, Truro

The first 12.8m Volvo B12B/Plaxton Panther that appeared at Coach & Bus Live in October, TT55 TRU, is to be used as a C42Ft team coach by the Cornish Pirates rugby team in the winter and in C49Ft configuration for summer touring.

Tyne Blue Line, Low Prudhoe, Northumberland

DAF SB220/Optare Delta B49F G7357/44/5 RTY have been acquired from Go North East.

Tyrer, Nelson, Lancs

The other Wright Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLE is PL05 UBR.

UK North, Gorton

Another former East Thames Buses Volvo Olympian/East Lancs is 219 (P341 ROO). Similar ex-Anglian Coaches 220/1 (R367/9 DJN) introduce the LED destination display to this fleet and have been repainted into full livery. Olympians 208/12 (P342/50 ROO) and DAF DB250s 300-3 (V651/2/4/5 LWT) have been transferred to the associated GM Buses fleet.

Unilink, Southampton

Scania/East Lancs OmniDekka 35 (YN55 NFP) is new, as are 12m Alexander Dennis Enviro300s 38/9 (MX55 NWL/K).

Uno, Hatfield

Alexander Dennis Dart/Caetano Nimbus B38F 153/4 (UN/UO55 UNO) have arrived. DAF SB220s 907/8 (P907/8 PWW) have gone to Burton, Haverhill.

Below: Latest double-deck addition to the Unilink fleet in Southampton is 35 (YN55 NFP), an East Lancs-bodied Scania OmniDekka. **DAVID JUKES**



Above: Although their ranks have been severely depleted by the arrival of new double-deckers, Travel West Midlands is still operating MCW Metrobus Mklls, including 2832 (B832 AOP) seen in Shirley. **STEVE RICHARDS**



Above: Tyne Blue Line G745 RTY, an Optare Delta-bodied DAF SB220 acquired from Go North East, at Ryton. **GARY MITCHELHILL**

Val's Classic, Chase Terrace, W Midlands

Former London DMS-class Daimler Fleetline/Park Royal and now-rare former West Midlands MCW-bodied Bristol VRT JOV 701P and ex-London Leyland National THX 196S have come from Kettlewell, Retford. The Fleetline was immediately offered for sale on eBay, but the Bristol appearance at the Walsall bus rally on 14 August and is to be repanelled and retained.

Viceroy, Saffron Walden

New BMC Probus coach AE05 MZL is in use.

Weavaway Travel, Newbury

Four Scania/Irizar coaches are due in a new livery of metallic light blue. Following the success of the giant Volvo B9TL/East Lancs Millennium Nordic tri-axle double-deckers, two more have been ordered. They will have high-backed seats. The B9TLs appear on schools contracts, rail replacements and private hires.

DAF SB3000/Van Hool B10 MBT, MDT, MFT reverted to their original H523/4/6 YCX registrations before sale last summer. Bova Futuras OO02 TEN and WA03 UDY/Z are being sold, Bova B11 WAY being re-registered W197 EJO before probable sale. Dennis Condors B10 MBD, MKC/F and MWA have been sold to Vale, Great Kingshill (dealer).

Wheels, Nuneaton

The office remains in Nuneaton, but operations are now based at Hinckley. Surprisingly, former Royal Blue ECW-bodied Bristol RELH6G coach OTA 645G — owned since December 2001 — has emerged from a thorough restoration to full psv Class VI standard in Midland Red coach livery of allover red with black roof. What might have been . . . maybe.

Wilts & Dorset GA

Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde B51F N606 NJO, N416 NRG have come from Oxford Bus Company and are understood to be for the Damory fleet. Leyland Olympian 702 on loan from Solent Blue Line has donated its engine and gearbox to indigenous Olympian 4904 (A904 JPR).

Wootton, Chesham

One of the first production Leyland Lynxes, C66 HOM, has been acquired from Oxford Bus Company, where it was used as a trainer. It was new to the West Midlands PTE.



Left: Like Unilink, Hatfield-based Uno caters primarily for students and has also added OmniDekkas to its fleet. One of three, 204 (UJ55 UNO) was photographed in Station Parade, Queensbury on route 614, which also forms part of the London Buses network. **MARK LYONS**

Volvo B6R/Alexander Dash 2270 (K270 ERM) has gone to Yorkshire Traction central works at Barnsley for preparation before transfer to Road Car for further service along with similar 2271/3/4 (K270/1/3 ERM, J704 BRM).

CHANNEL ISLANDS

GUERNSEY Island Coachways

The Leyland Swift coaches are to be refurbished. Withdrawn Swift 59 (69101, F303 MNK) and Leyland Cub 54 (64991, F56 BJW) remain on-site. Renault 57 ('the beast') continues in service, its police plate only temporarily removed (a usual indication of withdrawal).

Universal Limos

The former Northern General forward-entrance AEC Routemaster/Park Royal wears a garish overall advertising scheme with prominent 'Party Bus' lettering. It operates the Coastal Tour, which started in August and runs only on Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday afternoons with one-person operation, no commentary and an £8 fare for a return to Pleinmont.

Owner Mr Margo has applied to extend the service to St Martins from Town, St Peter Port — which would involve a challenging climb up narrow, winding roads, previously forbidden to RTs by the States vehicle examiner.

ALDERNEY Riduna Buses

The open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 did not operate last summer, owing to non-completion of refurbishment of the major hotel and consequentially reduced visitor numbers.

Woodside, Sheffield

Dennis Javelin/Wadham Stringer P109 WJO has been reregistered M4 WMT and re-seated to C70F for schools work, with an electronic destination display.

Yorkshire Rose, Barnsley

Volvo B12B/Van Hool Alizée T9 C53Ft YJ05 BXB is new while Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Excaltur C49Ft K19 FTG has come from Gordon, Rotherham.

Yorkshire Terrier YT

Optare Solo W303 EYG has been collected by Dawsonrentals, Hellaby (dealer), but Solo/B23F 205-8 (W205-8 EYG) have been purchased and not hired from Dawsonrentals.

Yorkshire Traction YT

Volvo B6BLE/East Lancs 134 (V134 MAK) has been fitted with an LED electronic destination display, but the remains of fire-damaged 132 (S132 WKY) have gone to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer) for removal of the remains of the bodywork, its chassis being returned to Barnsley for cannibalisation.

ECW-bodied Leyland Olympians 639/64 (A639 WDT, B664 CET) are with Regal, Chelmsford.

Zak's, Great Barr, Birmingham

KP02 PUV/X are Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Darts, last used by People's Express, West Bromwich. Volvo B10M-62/Plaxton Premiere 350 Expressliner S52 UBO and similar Y817 HHE have been acquired for the peak-hour Birmingham-Tamworth express service.

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Particular thanks are due, this month, for taking the time to make, and submit, your welcome contributions to Fleet News by letter and by e-mail: N. Ames, Anglia Bus News (www.busnews.org.uk), Simon Ayres, Andrew Babbs, Andrew Bagshaw, Chris Barker, Matthew Barker, Bill Barlow, Michael Bennett, Michael Bewes, Kenneth Bladon, British Bus Publishing, British Trolleybus Society, *Bus Fare*, Cambridge Omnibus Society, *Cambus*, Roger Carey, Channel Islands Bus Society, Steve Chapman, Andrew P. Churchill, Martin Clark, Roland Clausen-Thue, Brian Coney, Chris Corroy, Richard Cranmer, Crosville Enthusiasts Club, Cumbria Transport Society, Ian Davidge, R. Davis, Anthony Dee, Nigel Diplock, Julian Dolman, Robert Donaldson, Barry Dreilincourt, Ensignbus, Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group, *Essex Bus News*, Matthew Evans, Ian Francis, Fylde Tramway Society, Martin Gilbert, Richard Greasley, Greater Manchester Transport Society, Peter Guppy, Tim Hall, Adrian Healey, Paul N. Hill, Chris Hinds, Jack Hollington, Warwick Hulme, Tony F. Hunter, Paul D. Johnson, *The Journal*, David Jukes, Steven Knight, Lancaster & Morecambe PSV Society, *Lincolnshire & East Yorkshire Transport Review*, London Omnibus Traction Society, Christopher Lowe, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, *M&T News*, Merseyside Bus Club, Geoff Mills, Geoff Nelson, Ross Newman, Simon Nicholas, Billy Nicol, David A. Noddings, Northern Group Enthusiasts Club, Brendan O'Reilly, David Oliver, The Omnibus Society, PSV Circle, Deric Pemberton, James Penton, Bob Perrin, John Podgorski, T. S. Powell, H. Powell, Ribble Enthusiasts Club, Graham Richardson, Andy Rigby, Road Car, M. G. Robins, Dave Russell, Norman Sharrock, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society, Ian Simpson, Adrian C. Small, R. G. Smith, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, Eric Speckman, Alan Spencer, Staffordshire Bus Enthusiasts Group, Stagecoach Manchester, David Stanier, Chris Stewart, Steven Swinn, John Taylor, Pete Taylor, Dave B. Thomas, Steve Thompson, Nick Thomson, Transpire — The Chesterfield Bus Society, United Enthusiasts Club, J. Watson, Michael P. Webster, *Wessex bi-monthly Transport Review*, Wessex Transport Society, *West Yorkshire Information Service*, *West Yorkshire Metro Transport News*, Wheels, Steve White's website (spw24.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk), Lee Whitehead, Dave Wilder, Trystan Williams, Wilts & Dorset, Jim Young, John Young.

THE COACHPARC

The prototype Plaxton Viewmaster, the manufacturer's first high-floor coach, was a Leyland Leopard built for Tatlock's of Manchester in 1976. Looking like a jacked-up version of the recently launched Supreme, the Viewmaster was an ugly duckling but proved to Plaxton that the high-floor market was worth pursuing.

Production began in 1977 with a mixture of Leopards and Volvo B58s entering service, 20 of the Volvos going to Park's of Hamilton. Three were exported, two DAFs for the Netherlands and a Magirus Deutz for Denmark. All future production was for the home market and eight Leopards and 12 Volvos in 1978 bringing the total to 58.

Plaxton unveiled its Supreme IV was unveiled at the end of 1978 in a restyling exercise that included the Viewmaster IV, with altered side trim and a new front end. Unlike the Supreme, the Viewmaster IV retained the heavily arched front windscreen.

Eighteen Volvos and Leopards followed in 1979, then 22 in 1980. These included six with express doors for the growing Flightlink network operated by Flights of Birmingham.

Most of the 32 were built in 1981 were on Volvo chassis, including some on the new B10M, but there also were four DAF MB200s, and a final example on the Leopard was built specially for the West Yorkshire Police and fitted with smaller side windows. By now, Plaxton had built 130

JAMES PRINCE describes the Plaxton Viewmaster, the 1970s body that ushered in a new generation of 3.5m coaches in the UK

Viewmasters, against almost 7,000 Supremes, but it would only be built for another year.

While the Supreme was restyled again, mainly around the rear, changes to the Viewmaster were limited to offering of a GT version with extra equipment such as Tempo 100 (authorised to operate at 100km/h in West Germany) and tinted windows. Nonetheless, another 74 were built in 1982 — 12 DAF MB200s and equal numbers of

B10Ms and Leyland Tigers. Volvos for Everton of Droitwich and Tigers for British Airways and Vale of Llangollen had express doors.

The new Paramount range replaced both the Viewmaster and Supreme was announced at the end of 1982 and the new model included the 3500 high-floor version from the outset. This accounted for around half of Paramount production over the following 10 years.



Right: The updated front of the later Viewmaster IV on WUT 123X, a DAF new to Jeffways of High Wycombe in 1982. It was photographed nine years later near Charing Cross Pier, London. **JAMES PRINCE**

Scottish reports should be sent, please, to:
**Sandy Macdonald, 12 Morton Gardens,
 Maxwell Park, Glasgow, G41 4AF** to reach him by
 16 December for the February issue.

AAA Coaches, Kirknewton

Optare Nouvelle 2 C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YX05 DKK and Marcopolo C70F-bodied MAN 18.310 SN55 FEF were new in August and September respectively. Another acquisition in August was Marcopolo C35F-bodied MAN 11.220 PO54 VZT, ex-Holmeswood Coaches, Holmeswood.

LDV Convoy V599 KOG and Leinster-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D Y83 KSC had left the fleet by August. Plaxton Profile-bodied Volvo B7R FJ53 LZV was sold to Charlie Irons Coaches, Edinburgh in September.

Abbot, Loanhead

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R JIL 8257 (MIB 536, A669 HNX) was sold for scrap in September to Westwood (dealer), West Calder.

Aberfeldy Motors

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 32 (M59 WKA) passed to Clan, New Stevenston in August.

A & P Coaches, Barrhead

Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L426 CPB has been repainted into red and fawn fleet livery.

Arriva Scotland West AA

The sole Wright Urbanranger-bodied Mercedes-Benz OH1416 in the fleet, 1001 (N750 LUS, WSU 476, N750 LUS), left the fleet to become Arriva Tees 3027 in September.

Avondale, Clydebank

Monday to Saturday daytime Strathclyde Passenger Transport service 130 (Maryhill-Anniesland) was started on 25 September, replacing First Glasgow service 30 over this section of route.

Ayrways, Ayr

Alexander H47/33F-bodied Scania N113CRB H224 LOM was acquired from Collison, Stonehouse in August.

Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympians B114 SJA and C184 YBA passed to McLean, Chapelhall in August. Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D L270 OSX and Berkhof-bodied Volvo B10M-60 J400 CCH (MIL 3606, J400 CCH) were also sold at that time.

Bain, Oldmeldrum

Further to the October issue, SV54 CKU is the C35F-seated BMC Probus 850, which entered service by the end of last year.

Beekman, Airdrie

August acquisitions comprised B29F-seated Optare MetroRider MR03 J694 CGK ex-Blackburn Transport 614, and Wadham Stringer B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D L698 AGA ex-Edwards, Edinburgh.

Blue Bus, Shotts

Alexander (Belfast) B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D K112 XHG was acquired in March ex-Stagecoach North West 40412.

Browning, Whitburn

Duple-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R CSO 388Y (TSV 777, ASA 7Y) was sold for scrap to Westwood (dealer), West Calder in August.

Buskers, Galashiels

Autobus B33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D V389 NOA joined this fleet in February ex-Clarkson, South Elmsall.

Caber, Aberfeldy

Excel-bodied LDV Convoy SP05 AUV was in use with this operator by September.

Christie, Alloa

This operator acquired former Bus Éireann Caetano Enigma C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 Y804 GDV in April, but its previous registration is not known.

Beulas-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391E 12.35 W31 OWT had passed to West Coast Coaches, Dysart by September.

City Sprinter, Renfrew

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D G279 TSL had passed to Buzz-a-Bus, Aughnacloy by July.

Clan, New Stevenston

Alexander B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D M59 WKA was acquired in August ex-Aberfeldy Motor Services, Aberfeldy 32.

Classique (Dean), Paisley

The latest addition to the fleet is C28F-seated Kässbohrer Setra S210H F72 GYB (PSU 610) ex-Edinburgh Coach Lines in April.

Coakley, Motherwell

B29F-seated Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart SF55 GXL was new in September, similar SF55 GXJ, HBC/D following in October. They entered service in allover red except HBC, which was in full fleet livery. More arrivals in October were Plaxton Pointer B36F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs P205/10 OLX, previously Metroline Travel DL5, 10, which also entered service then in full fleet livery.

Collison, Stonehouse

Jonckheere C55F-bodied Volvo B7R CE02 YRU arrived in July ex-MacEwan, Amisfield and former military Wadham Stringer C70F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA K966 SUS (75 KK 08) was purchased in August. Alexander H47/33F-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50s C793, 801 USG were acquired from Stagecoach Fife in September but were not being used initially.

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N114 DWE passed to MacEwan, Amisfield in July, while East Lancs-bodied Scania N113DRB G807 LAG and Alexander-bodied N113DRBs H223/4 LOM were sold to Ayrways, Ayr in August.

Crawford, Neilston

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B12M SJ04 LLE was re-registered S21 HCC in June 2004, shortly after being delivered.

Davidson, Bathgate

Further to the October issue, the Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Darts new in August are SN05 HDC-F.

Journeys on evening peak hour service 96 (Bathgate-Fauldhouse via Whitburn) are being cancelled from 5 December.

Deveron, Macduff

Jonckheere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P413 TNG joined this fleet in July ex-Stewart, Inverinan.

Dickson, Paisley

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 L238 CCW passed to Cumfybus, Churchtown in July.

DJ International, Barrhead

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 M133 SKY (7726 AT, M133 SKY) was re-registered RIL 2576 in September.

Further to the October issue, the company apparently decided not to proceed with the proposed operation of services 901 (Glasgow, Buchanan bus station-Gourock, McInroy's Point) and 906 (Glasgow, Buchanan bus station-Largs) in competition with the new Stagecoach/Citylink joint venture, neither service appearing as anticipated on 4 October.

Docherty, Glasgow

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D F609 XMS re-appeared in service in mid-September, after an absence of a year or so.

Below: First Edinburgh Wright Solar-bodied 65723 (SN54 KFF) is one of three Scania L94UBs painted in this two-tone blue Unilink livery for the new service connecting Stirling University with the city centre. **MURDOCH CURRIE**



Donaldson, Strathkinness

Optare Solera-bodied Mercedes-Benz 1223L FX03 ECF was sold to Ferguson (dealer), Whitburn in April.

Easter Ross, Tain

August acquisitions comprised Plaxton C53F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R YBN 629V (XAP 956, YBN 629V) ex-Tittertoning, Blencow and Caetano Algarve C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 B10 MCR (C633 KDS) from Reid, Rhynie.

Edinburgh Coach Lines

Caetano Optimo-bodied Toyota Coaster HZB30R N122 RJF was acquired by Collins, Motherwell in April. Kässbohrer Setra S210 F72 GYB (PSU 610) had passed to Classique, Paisley by April and similar S215 F73 GYB (PSU 614) to Dallas, Penicuik by September.

Edinburgh Tours LB

AEC Routemasters 2 (VLT 163) and 12 (CUV 248C) have been transferred to this fleet from Mac Tours.

First Aberdeen FG

Northern Counties H43/30F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R 30134 (B129 WNB) was transferred to this fleet from First Manchester in October.

First Edinburgh FG

Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TL double-deckers 32679-83 (SN55 HFG/H/J-L) arrived in October.

First Glasgow FG

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50 48045 [MV57] (N345 CJA) was transferred from First Leicester in September and allocated initially to Motherwell depot.

Plaxton President-bodied Dennis Tridents 32825/7-35 (T825/7-35 LLC), Wright Crusader 2-bodied Volvo B6BLEs 40558/9 (T307/8 VYG) and Optare Solos 53202/3 (SF05 KUJ/K) have local fleetnumbers DT5, 7-15, MV100/1 and MS28/9 respectively.

Ex-First Edinburgh Volvo Citybus 31217 [AH102] and similar native 31264 [AH18] have been given mainly green allover vinyl advertising liveries for Egg Finance, but with fleet colours retained on the front.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Olympians 31451-5 [VO62-6] (N962-6 SOS) were transferred to First Wyvern in August.

New Strathclyde Passenger Transport Monday to Friday service 99 (Coatbridge-Eurocentral-Bellshill) began on 31 October.

First Stop, Renfrew

B31F-seated Optare MetroRider MR15 L735 MWW was acquired from McGill, Port Glasgow in October and entered service in allover white with First Stop Travel fleetnames and logos in red.

Wright Handybus-bodied Dennis Dart J952 MFT has also been repainted into this style.

Fraser, Munloch

Van Hool Alizée-bodied Volvo B10M-60 J239 NNC was re-registered CEZ 8153 in July.

French, Coldingham

Jonckheere C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 Y139 KCS (LSK 504) was acquired in July ex-Highland Heritage, Dalmally.

Gibson, Renfrew

Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Darts V100, 400 CBC were repainted into current white and dark blue livery in October.

Gillen, Port Glasgow

Former Scottish Borders Council Plaxton C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SL02 SMO joined this fleet in September.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-61 TAZ 4998 (A520 NCL) was re-registered GNZ 6383 in April.

Caetano-bodied DAF MB200 SJI 1878 (B844 WWS), Optare MetroRider MR09 H59 PNY and Devon Conversions-bodied Mercedes-Benz 410D J999 JHK had left the fleet by August.

Gordon, Leslie

C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-370 Y38 TSJ arrived in August ex-Beaton, Blantyre and was immediately re-registered R8 OVA.

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D ACZ 7664 (J362 MVH) had left the fleet by May.

Hamilton, Falkirk

Caetano C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 G903 WAY (A6 WAY, G903 WAY) was acquired in July ex-Mitchell, Plean.

Harlequin, Dunblane

Plaxton C35F-bodied Bedford YMP D169 WRC joined this fleet in July ex-Bysiau Cwm Taf, Whitland.

Harte, Greenock

Plaxton Premiere 350-bodied Volvo B10M-62 P59 XNL had been re-registered IIB 7633 by September.

Henderson, Hamilton

The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 616Cdi low-floor demonstrator tried on Strathclyde Passenger Transport Ring'n'Ride service 900 (Three Valleys) on 6 September was Mellor-bodied PN05 FVL.

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N851 ASF had been sold by August.

Horsburgh, Pumpherston

Four return journeys per day Sunday-only service 475 (Livingston-Linlithgow) were cancelled from 14 November and hourly, weekday service 56 (Armadale-Livingston via Bathgate) from 22 November.

Irvine, Law

B29F-seated Alexander Dennis Mini Pointer Dart SN55 DUU was new in September and is in Strathclyde Passenger Transport carmine and cream livery.

Irvine, Salsburgh

Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 F171 JKH (A9 EYC, HIL 7746, F300 JNC) was acquired in August ex-East Yorkshire 359.

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4Rs FDC 409/10V and similar PSU3F/2R HPY 421V were sold to Dunsmore (dealer), Larkhall in April.

Jacobite, Inverness

Optare-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YX05 DJF was new in June.

Jay, Greengairs

East Lancs DP51F-bodied Volvo B10M-55 J420 JBV and similar B51F-bodied J422 JBV arrived in September, ex-Blackburn Transport 420/2.

Kineil, Fraserburgh

Onyx-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D R611 GFS passed to Victoria, Peterhead in August.

Leask, Lerwick

Further to the September issue, Crest-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D W20 JLS was re-registered W992 GPS before being sold to Holloway (dealer), Willenhall.

Liddell, Auchinleck

Alexander H47/33F-bodied Scania N113DRB H219 LOM joined this fleet in July ex-Alec Head, Lutton. August additions comprised Alexander TS B65F-bodied Dennis Dorchester SDA804 A102 RGE ex-Goldstraw, Leek but new as Central SMT DD2; MCW H47/33F-bodied MCW Metrobus DR104/11 JIL 8206 (A118 XWE) ex-Cass, Moreton; and East Lancs B57F-bodied Scania K92CRB D727 GDE ex-Brown, Aboyne.

JIL 8206 was given back its original registration in September, allowing D727 GDE to be re-registered JIL 8206.



SCOTTISH COLUMN

SANDY MACDONALD

Why Stagecoach ended Yellow Taxibus service

As reported in the News section last month, the Stagecoach Fife Yellow Taxibus pilot project ended on 13 November when the last services ran between Dunfermline and Edinburgh. Customers continue to have the option of high frequency conventional bus services between Fife and Edinburgh.

Stagecoach says Yellow Taxibus established a core commuter and leisure market of around 1,000 passengers a week, including those on weekend and evening trips to Edinburgh. Customer feedback recorded high satisfaction ratings in terms of comfort, reliability, value-for-money, frequency of pick-ups and driver customer service. More than half of customers were women with some attracted to Yellow Taxibus for personal safety reasons, while nearly a third of passengers were in managerial or technical jobs.

While the initiative did not achieve commercial viability, the group says it demonstrated the potential of such services to widen travel options, boost social inclusion and create a new passenger base, particularly among former car users, with modest public funding support.

Significantly, the operating costs of Yellow Taxibus, which used a manual booking system rather than a more expensive computer-based system, were relatively low at 80p per mile. The operating costs of many other equivalent demand responsive transport (DRT) services, which tend to require a high per-passenger public subsidy, are at least twice as much.

Stagecoach is in discussions with Fife Council about the potential for a partnership DRT project in the region.

Smartcards for all of Scotland

The Scottish Executive is leading the widespread use of smartcards throughout Scotland by planning to introduce a single scheme covering concessionary travel on buses and ferries, public services, leisure facilities and schools. The scheme will comply with ITSO, the industry-based initiative created to provide a fully inter-operable, contactless smartcard specification.

The start of a national free bus travel scheme for disabled people and over-60s next year is driving the project, which will integrate the existing and proposed smartcard schemes of 11 local authorities. The new government scheme will cover all 32 Scottish local authorities and is said to be the biggest of its type in the United Kingdom, with a projected 1.5 million users.

The new Scotland Citizen's Account Smartcard (S-CAS) scheme is planned to go live in April 2007, and tenders are currently being invited for around 6,500 tickets machines/readers for buses and ferries, along with associated back office systems and the central ITSO components. In addition to facilitating bus and ferry travel, it will include an e-purse for children to buy school meals, allow pupils to register and gain access to computer systems. Council leisure facilities and library services will also be included. The design of the system will allow use by universities, which already have their own schemes.

Bus operators will be provided with machines where required, and conductors on Strathclyde's crew-operated services around Dundee will require to be given hand-held readers. S-CAS will also support Lothian Buses' successful smartcard scheme and allow its migration to ITSO; staff training is an important element of the scheme.

Lippen, Paisley

By October, Optare Solo M920 L5 PPN had been repainted into fleet livery with an orange skirt and blue waistband.

New Monday to Saturday half-hourly service 5 (Linwood-Pollock Centre) is due to start on 16 December.

Lochs & Glens, Aberfoyle

Jonckheere Mistral 70-bodied Volvo B12B FJ05 AOM is named *Loch Katrina*.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12M FP51 EUN was acquired by Sim, Boot in May.

Lothian LB

The first of the new Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TL double-deckers to enter service were 701-15/7 (SN55 BJX-Z, BKAD-G/J-L/U/V/X/Y, BLF) which appeared on service 3/A (Mayfield-Wester Hailes) from 14 October onwards. They have yellow roofs and front domes together with 'Club Class' branding for this service.

Volvo Olympian 431 has been repainted in the bright shade of red applied to buses on service 15 (Tranent-Penicuik) and has white rather than the standard black window pillars on the others with Alexander Royale bodies. Volvo Olympians 282, 969 and Leyland Olympian 344 have been given mainly green allover vinyl advertisements for Egg Finance, but retain fleet livery on the front and on the doors in the case of 969.

East Lancs-bodied Scania N94UD OmniDekka demonstrator 999 (SN04 CPE) was withdrawn from service in October.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68C/1R 659 (GSC 659X), new to Lothian Region Transport in 1981, has been acquired for preservation by members of the Gifford Transport Group and has recently taken up residence at Gifford. It took part in the last Atlantean running day on 3 January 2000 and was then sold, its latter owner being the Crazy Fire Engine Company, Glasgow, which planned to use it as an adult entertainment bus.

Below: Lothian 702 (SN55 BJY), one of the new Wright Eclipse Gemini-bodied Volvo B7TLs with yellow Club Class branding for service 3. The council-owned company is working its way through playing card suits, having already got TransBus Tridents with hearts branding. **KEITH MCGILLIVRAY**



GROUP CODES

AA

Arriva
Passenger
Services

DG

Comfort
DelGro

FG

FirstGroup

LB

Lothian
Buses

NX

National
Express
Group

RN

Rapsons

ST

Stagecoach
Group

YT

Traction
Group

Lowe, Cuminestown

Caetano C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 R550 MSS (*HSK 815, R550 MSS*) was acquired in May ex-Reid, Rhynie and re-registered R9 WGC in June. A further addition in July was Mayflower M16-bodied Ford Transit W42 ANW, previously with Watermill, Fraserburgh.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60 CCZ 8110 (*G471 ULG, B4 BCL, FSU 804, G368 GCV*) was sold in November last year. Other vehicles sold in July comprised Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58-61 GIB 7513 (*BSU 76, NSU 640V*); Caetano-bodied DAF MB200 PAG 225A (*B524 DRS, WSU 486, B669 GBD*); Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L122 DRN (*K122 XHG*); and Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D NUI 1581 (*L433 CPJ*)

McCall, Lockerbie

The first report of this operator for some time lists acquisitions as Duple C49F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R EJ1 2340 (*JNM 751Y*) ex-Sutcliffe, Crofton in December 2003; Duple C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 RSJ 812Y (*FJ1 4378, RSJ 812Y*) ex-Owen, Denbigh in August 2004; Van Hool C48F-bodied DAF MB200 IIL 8580 (*FSV 961, CGA 197X*) ex-Stephenson, Workington in October 2004; Duple C50F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R KLX 108 (*DLJ 577Y*) ex-Millman, Humberston in November 2004; Van Hool C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 B81 XST (*HDZ 5407, NFL 881*) ex-Rapson 472 in May; and rare Van Hool C51F-bodied Leyland Royal Tiger B758 UHG (*CIL 700, B758 UHG*) ex-Interchoice, Wolverhampton in August. KLX 108 regained its original registration in March.

Van Hool-bodied AEC Reliance VFY 770 (*EGS 171T*) was scrapped on site at the end of 2003 and Bova Futura FLD12-250 TJ1 6572 (*A84 RUM, A7 YET, A901 KRT, 5048 PP, 125 EJU*) was sold in May.

McColl, Balloch

Former Travel West Midlands Marshall B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D P232 EJW had joined this fleet by October.

MCW-bodied MCW Metrobus POG 527Y is in an allover yellow schoolbus livery with black chevrons on the rear. Park Royal-bodied Leyland Titan TX1 3757 (*WYV 49T*); MCW Metrobuses GOG 224/67W, LOA 351/90/4X, POG 485/93Y; Carlyle-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D TX1 3769 (*H108 HDV*); and AVB-bodied Volkswagen LT TX1 2251 (*R477 UAK*) had all gone by February.

McDade, Uddingston

Plaxton DP29FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D SF55 BKA was new in September.

Excel-bodied Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 413Cdi BU51 AYM was sold to Western (dealer), Bellshill at that time.

MacEwan, Amisfield

Plaxton DP24FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D N114 DWE arrived in July ex-Collison, Stonehouse and extremely rare Montana C53F-bodied MAN 18.310s Y11 EAD, Y111 EAD followed in October ex-Alec Head, Luton. The Montana bodies were built in Malaysia and fitted out by Head's in Northamptonshire. Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B7R CE02 YRU was sold to Collison, Stonehouse in July.

McGill, Port Glasgow

Optare MetroRider MR15 L735 MWW passed to First Stop, Renfrew in October.

McQueen, Garelochhead

Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D V145 ESF had passed to Stacey, Carlisle by June.

Mac Tours, Edinburgh LB

From 6 November, this operator took over provision of the tendered service 67 (Waterloo Place-Westside Plaza) from Waverley Travel. As a temporary measure, Dennis Darts 195 (Edinburgh Castle Shuttle livery) and 197 (Smart Ridadards vinyls) had their front ends repainted into Mac Tours colours — 195 previously had a white front and 197 Lothian Buses red and white — for use on the replacement service. AEC Routemasters 2 (VLT 163) and 12 (CUV 248C) have been transferred to the Edinburgh Tours fleet.

Marbill, Beith

Plaxton Profile C70F-bodied Volvo B7R SF05 KWO was new in March.

Marshall, Baillieston

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-62 7617 SM (*R790 WSB*) was given back its original registration in August before being sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis.

Mathieson, Inverness

Further to the May issue, Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-62 S67 UBO was not acquired in January.

Midland, Auchterarder

Stables, Newmill acquired Plaxton-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S336 NSN (*S77 JDS*) in August.

Miller, Airdrie

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D L270 OSX joined this fleet in September ex-Ayrways, Ayr.

Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tigers D579 MVR (*991 FOT, D579 MVR*) and F620 XWY (*OIL 9264, F620 XWY*) were re-registered OUI 6416 and OKZ 8416 respectively in September. Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3Rs SX1 6396 (*FAC 8Y*) and A403 HRJ (*WLT 694, A403 HRJ*) were sold in September.

Milligan, Mauchline

Caetano C53F-bodied DAF SB3000 GIL 3271 (*F208 PNR*) was acquired in August ex-Beaton, Blantyre.

Millport Motors, Millport

L910 JRN, an East Lincs B34F-bodied Dennis Dart 9SDL new to London Central, was being used by this firm in allover white by October. Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dart SLF P743 HND was delicensed at that time.

Mitchell, Plean

Jonckheere C55F-bodied Volvo B7R CE02 YRU joined this fleet in July ex-MacEwan, Amisfield. August additions comprised Jonckheere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 L756 YGE (*GSO 84V, L756 YGE*) ex-Fairline, Glasgow and Marcopolo C50F-bodied Dennis Javelin R650 VNN (*USY 858, R650 VNN*) ex-Prentice, West Calder.

L756 YGE was re-registered YSU 875 in August and Northern Counties-bodied Leyland Olympian B125 TVU was re-registered B88 BUS at that time.

Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry

Ikarus C53F-bodied DAF SB3000 R166 GNW arrived in August ex-Fourway, Leeds.

Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1Rs CWG 694, 727V were sold to Watermill, Fraserburgh in July 2004. Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 BSK 789 (*K302 JTS*) regained its original registration in June before being sold then to Reilly, Bootle. Dormobile-bodied Iveco 49.10 G315 TKO passed to Blyth, Leven in July and Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D H11 JYM (*H907 SHL*) was with Stuart, Carlisle by September. MCW

Metrobus DR102-C753 OCN had left the fleet by November last year, while similar C769/75/87 OCN and Van Hool Alizée-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ D231 HMT (*FSU 393, FSU 395, D231 HMT*) had all followed by July.

Munro, Jedburgh

Further to previous reports, Northern Counties DP31D-bodied Dennis Dart 9.8SDL J955 SBU joined this fleet in December 2002 and is numbered 472.

Nicoll, Laurencekirk

Alexander B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds L155/6 UEM, M158 WVM and similar DP23F-bodied M102/4 WKA joined this fleet in August, having previously been Green Bus, Darlington 15/6/8/2/4.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Plaxton Beaver 2 B27F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O810D P252 RUM was acquired in September ex-Travel West Midlands 252.

Park, Hamilton

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B12M coaches HSK 651-3/5/7/8/60, LSK 495/6, 1 RWM were re-registered SG03 ZCR/H/D/B/C, ZBS/MH/B/K respectively in September. Another of this type, LSK 845, was repainted from allover white into Scottish Citylink colours in September.

Similar SF02 JHY (*HSK 647*) and SW02 VTP (*SKS 953*) were acquired earlier this year by Shaw & Duffelen, Maxey and North Dorset, Bournemouth respectively.

Pegasus, Perth

New Plaxton Cheeta C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YN05 HVF had arrived by September. YN05 HUZ, a Plaxton Paragon C53F-bodied Iveco EuroRider, had followed by October.

Petrie, Forfar

Autobus Classeque-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D XIL 6471 (*XIL 6474, L342 SUG, L20 KEL*) was re-registered L342 SUG in July before being sold.

By October, Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D DKZ 6896 (*F622 GRS*) had been given back its original registration, allowing Plaxton-bodied Dennis Javelin 8.5SDL F739 WMS (*LSK 529, F739 WMS*) to become DKZ 6896 at that time.

Prentice, Haddington

Hestair Duple 425 TIL 3816 (*J82 CFF*) passed to McBurney, Larnie in June and Crest-bodied Mercedes-Benz 814L YCX 320 (*R132 KGD*) had left the fleet by September.

Prentice, West Calder

Caetano C57F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 YIL 8799 (*187 NKN, C347 GSD*) was acquired in July ex-Chalkwell, Sittingbourne. Plaxton C48F-bodied B10M-62s W653/7 FUM followed in August ex-Wallace Arnold, Leeds and were re-registered YSV 125, USY 858 respectively in September.

Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 YSV 607 (*MBZ 1758, G555 TSN*) was re-registered G555 TSN in March before being sold to Barratt, Nantwich, allowing similar H882 AVK (*H5 DTS, H882 AVK*) to become YSV 607. Marcopolo-bodied Dennis Javelin USY 858 (*R650 VNN*) regained its original registration before being sold to Mitchell, Plean in August.

Vehicles sold for scrap during the past year include Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-61 WGB 201W (*5965 EL, LHL 374W*); Duple-bodied Volvo B10M-61s EKS 83X (*QUL 5506, OHE 264X*), YFJ 67X (*CBZ 4622, YFJ 67X, UTC 872, OHE 268X*); Neoplan Skyliner N122/3s MIB 8949 (*PSR 143Y, 8000 SC, NSP 823Y, LSP 223X*), 951 SAU (*A103 MW7*); Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Ailsa B55-10s OSN 855/8/9Y; Alexander-bodied Ailsa B55-10 A81 SSP; Plaxton-bodied Scania K112 E756 ODF (*FLZ 7953, E756 ODF*); Duple-bodied DAF MB230 E320 RSC (*FLZ 7953, 570 PRR, E597 LVH*); Scott-bodied Mercedes-Benz 609D E563 JKS (*81 CBK, E119 BGD*); and similar Whittaker-bodied F466 CWE.

Pride of the Clyde, Greenock

CH57/20Ct-seated Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 FXU 355 (*J449 NTT*) was acquired in September ex-Patterson, Seahouses.

Reid, Rhynie

Ford M16-bodied Ford Transits SV05 ZPP and SW05 DJE were new in June, followed by similar SJ55 VCE in September.

Caetano-bodied Volvo B10M-62 HSK 815 (*R550 MSS*) regained its original registration in May before being sold to Lowe, Cuminestown. Similar B10M-61 B10 MCR (*C633 KDS*) was sold to Easter Ross, Tain in August.

Rennie, Dunfermline

East Lincs-bodied Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1Rs BHZ 9541 (*B555 ATX*) and B558 ATX (*BHZ 9548, B558 ATX*) were sold to Williams, Ancaster by September.

Left: One of the unique pair of Montana-bodied MAN 18.310s that MacEwan's acquired in October, Y11 EAD, participating in the 2002 UK Coach Rally at Brighton with original owner Alec Head of Luton. **ALAN MILLAR**



Rowe, Muirkirk

Jaycas M16-bodied LDV Convoy S617 LRN was acquired in September ex-Queen, Paisley. Ford Transit P376 NSX was also acquired then. Volvo B10Ms CCZ 9222 and YDZ 4427, with Jonckheere C51Ft and C53F-bodywork respectively, had arrived by October from Bullick, Rathfriland.

On 25 September, the premises at Western Road, Kilmarnock were entered and 16 vehicles vandalised with the cost of repairing the damage estimated at £40,000. Only three vehicles out on hire at the time were unaffected. Liddell, Auchinleck lent nine vehicles and Marbill, Beith four to meet contract commitments. Four youths caught on closed circuit television were arrested in connection with the incident.

Plaxton Paramount 3500-bodied Volvo B10M-61 4504 RU (*D804 SGB*) was re-registered VJI 9410 in September. Jonckheere Mistral 50-bodied Volvo B10M-62s VJI 9412 (*Y201 CDS, LSK 509*) and VJI 9414 (*T716 UOS, HSK 647*) have been sold Bullick, Rathfriland.

Royal Mail

Service 27 (Killin-Callander) was cancelled from 4 October.

Scotguide, Glasgow

MCW Metrobus A983 SYF was repainted allover black in October.

Silver Choice, East Kilbride

Van Hool Alizée C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 D559 UGB (*731 AFD, D742 COS, 790 CVD, D608 MVR*) and C49Ft-seated Bova Futura FHD12-340 R27 HNS were acquired in August from the now-defunct Beaton, Blantyre fleet. The Bova was re-registered SIL 9995 in September.

Simpson, Rosehearty

Crest M16-bodied Mercedes-Benz 312D VIL 8750 (*P673 GSL*) was acquired from Cheyne, Turriff in August and Caetano Enigma C49Ft-bodied Volvo B12B SN55 SON was new in October. Volvo coaches re-registered earlier in the year comprised Berkhof-bodied B10M-62 711 GRM (*R339 NRU*) to R339 NRU in March; Van Hool-bodied B10M-60 K460 VVR (*B10 MDP, K460 VVR*) to LSK 476 in June; and Caetano-bodied B10M-62 N83 LSE (*HSK 816, N83 LSE*) to UAF 780 in August.

R339 NRU and LSK 476 then passed to Avalon, Glastonbury and Jervis, Port Talbot in July and August respectively, and Beulas-bodied Iveco EuroRider 391E FN02 VCO was sold to Caetano (dealer), Heather in September.

Slaemuir, Port Glasgow

Plaxton B25F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D L254 YOD, previously Plymouth Citybus 254, joined this fleet in February.

Stables, Newmill

Plaxton C29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D S336 NSN (*S77 JDS*) was acquired in August ex-Midland, Auchterarder.

Stagecoach Bluebird ST

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50s 15272/90/7 (C802, 790/7 USG) were transferred to this fleet from Stagecoach Fife by October.

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 40052 (P352 ASO) and similar Magic Mini-liveried 40089 (K489 FFS) were destroyed in an arson attack on Inverness depot in the early hours on 16 October.

East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dominator DDA1016 15049 (F149 BKH) was transferred to Stagecoach Glasgow in October.

Stagecoach Fife ST

New B27F-seated Optare Solos delivered in October but stored in Kirkcaldy at that time comprised 47228-34 (SP55 CXG/H/J-N).

Further Alexander H47/31F-bodied Scania N113DRBs transferred from Stagecoach Busways by October comprised 15301/4-7/9 (H421/4-7/9 BNL) with 15301/9 allocated to Cowdenbeath depot and 15304-7 to Glenrothes. Similar 15302/3/8 have been allocated to Aberhill depot.

B24F-seated Optare Solo M780 demonstrator YJ55 BLZ was on loan to Fife Council during the last week of September, for testing in conjunction with operators on several services, including Stagecoach Fife B1, 62/A, 68. It was not used in service.

Alexander-bodied Volvo Citybus B10M-50s 15272/90/7 (C802, 790/7 USG) were transferred to Stagecoach

Right: Stagecoach has introduced variety into its Fife fleet by transferring at least nine Alexander-bodied Scania N113DRBs from Busways. Here, Aberhill-based 15302 (H422 BNL) leaves Glenrothes bus station. DANIEL STAZICKER

Bluebird by October. Former Allison, Dunfermline Carlyle-bodied Dennis Dart 8.5SDLs 32342/4/6 (H162 NON, H154/46 MOB) were listed for disposal in September.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

East Lancs H45/31F-bodied Dennis Dominator DDA1016 15049 (F149 BKH) joined this fleet in October and entered service in current Stagecoach fleet livery. It was previously with Stagecoach Bluebird for a brief period, but before that was with Stagecoach Hull.

In October, Jonckheere Monaco-bodied MAN 24.350 50035 lost its Motorvator red and white livery in favour of blue and yellow Scottish Citylink colours.

Stagecoach Western ST

Three new Alexander Dennis Trident ALX400 double-deckers entered service in October in A1 Service blue and white livery as 18332-4 (SF55 NNZ, NOH/U). They have been allocated to Kilmarnock depot and their arrival allowed the frequency of A1 service 11 (Kilmarnock-Ardrossan) to be increased to take account of the withdrawal of the parallel First Ayrshire service at that time.

Further to last month's issue, Optare Tempo demonstrator YJ55 BLX is B43F.

Stepend, Glenmavis

Plaxton C49F-bodied Volvo B10M-62 S13 ORO was acquired in July ex-Mason, Bo'ness.

Service 10 (Newarthill-Wishaw Hospital via Carfin and Motherwell) which started on 30 June, is to be withdrawn on 14 December.

Stewart, Portlethen

Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D L932 UGA passed to Mabblerley, Portland in July.

Strathay YT

Two new Optare Solos, which entered service in October, are 259/60 (YN55 KND, YJ55 BHW). Both are based at Dundee for the new Cross City Direct service, and together with similar 258 (SP55 DND), are branded for the route.

Stuart, Carluke

New B28F-seated Optare Solo SlimLine M880 MX55 BYG entered service in October.

Thomson, Glasgow

B26F-seated Optare MetroRider MR03 K359 SCN was acquired in September ex-A2B, Southampton although it had previously been with McKindless, Wishaw. Similar B25F-seated J216 BWU (*17314 Guernsey, J216 BWU*) followed in October ex-Wilson, Port Glasgow and entered service still in white and blue Scottish Travel livery.

Step-entrance Marshall-bodied MAN 11.220 P478 JEG has been given Airbus Express lettering for use on service 950 (Glasgow city centre-Glasgow Airport) but remains allover red.

Alexander Dash-bodied Volvo B6-50s L841 CDG and M847 HDF passed to Mulley, Ixworth in June.

Victoria, Peterhead

Onyx C24F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 614D R611 GFS joined this fleet in August ex-Kineil, Fraserburgh.

Wait, Chirnside

LDV M16-bodied LDV Convoy FN02 KXZ joined this fleet in July ex-National Car Rental.

Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds N346/52 OBC passed to Pickford, Chippenham in February and July respectively, MCW Metrorider MF150/27 E821 BTN, Ford Transit H401 VKS and LDV Convoy R75 VOM also left the fleet earlier this year.

Watermill, Fraserburgh

Alexander H45/33F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1Rs CWG 694, 727V joined this fleet from Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry in July last year but have not been reported until



now. Ford M16-bodied Ford Transit SH04 YZB was acquired in July this year ex-Lowe, Cuminstown. Plaxton Cheetah C33F-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D YN55 KMO and similar Onyx C24F-bodied MX55 HXP were new in September, while former military Wadham Stringer DP70F-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDA N195 RGD also arrived then.

CWG 727V was sold in July to an equestrian centre in Aberdeen together with similar YBK 339V and Alexander-bodied Dennis Dominator DD137B MSL 281X (*WLT 367, FGE 432X*). Other vehicles sold comprise Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 YSV 797 (*E476 YWJ*) to Thandi, Smethwick last December; similar EIJ 4016 (*H881 AVK, H4 DTS, H881 AVK*) to Rooney, Hilltown in July; Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz 711D L360 HFU to Dallas, Penicuik in August; and Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-61 JLL 8256 (*C180 USS, 7173 WW, C301 JNS*) to Fraser, Duncanston in September.

Wave, Stirling

Vehicles acquired earlier this year comprise Plaxton C32FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz Vario O814D X334 SHH ex-Caldew, Dalston in March; UVG DP16FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 410D W252 UW0 ex-London Borough of Camden in March; and UVG B16FL-bodied Mercedes-Benz 412D V48 JNY ex-K-Line, Honley in May.

Waverley, Edinburgh

Vehicles used by this operator but not recorded previously include B29F-seated Dennis/Plaxton Mini Pointer Dart X185 BNH ex-Top Line, York in August 2003, and similar TransBus Mini Pointer Dart SN03 LGA acquired from Alexander Dennis in June 2004. A further acquisition from BMC (dealer), Coventry in August was BMC C35F-bodied BMC Probus 850 BU05 EGD.

The registration for service 68 (Gyle Centre circular) was cancelled at the end of July, followed by that for service 65/67 (Waterloo Place/Ratho-Westside Plaza) from 12 November when Mac Tours took over the contract.

West Coast, Campbeltown

1980 Plaxton Supreme IV-bodied Bedford YMQ FSL 615W was sold for preservation in June.

Whitelaw, Stonehouse

This firm has placed a repeat order with Wrightbus for five Eclipse Urban-bodied Volvo B7RLE single-deckers.

Whyte, Newmachar

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-55 W248 GSE passed to Sharpe, Scarrington in July.

Wilson, Gourrock

Optare MetroRider MRO3 J216 BWU (*17314 Guernsey, J216 BWU*) has been sold to Thomson, Glasgow.

Wilson, Rhu

Sitcar Beluga-bodied Mercedes-Benz O815D SC02 KXU was sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis in June.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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Top: The War Memorial was the traditional Saltcoats terminus for the Clyde Coast service to Largs. GX 2602, shown there in this early 1940s view, was a Leyland Titan TD1 new in 1932 to the Westminster Omnibus Company in London. After being sold by the London Passenger Transport Board in 1940, it passed to Cowie Brothers of Stevenston and was one of two ex-London TD1s that joined the Clyde Coast fleet at that time. It gained a Cowieson body from a former Glasgow Corporation bus, probably before entering service. That body outlasted the chassis, being rebuilt by Pickering in 1944 and transferred to a new Albion chassis in 1947.

**S. L. POOLE/
OMNIBUS SOCIETY**



Upper middle: Dozens of ex-London buses migrated to the Ayrshire coast from the mid-1950s when London Transport began selling off its early postwar RTs and RTLs. Owners in the A1 Service co-operative alone bought more than 60 in the 1950s and 1960s, with others purchased by AA Motor Services and Clyde Coast. This typical scene opposite Saltcoats railway station shows two of them among cars that include an Austin Metropolitan with spare wheel cover. LUC 305 (originally RTL1095) was a Park Royal-bodied Leyland 7RT bought by Andrew Hunter of Dregghorn in 1964. The red bus behind with rain mate-clad woman in conversation with its driver is a lowbridge Northern Counties-bodied Leyland PD3/3 of Western SMT on service 15 from Glasgow.

PHOTOBUS



Lower middle: The same location viewed from the opposite side of the street in August 1985, with AA Motor Services EHJ 29X en route between Ayr and Ardrossan. This Marshall-bodied Scania N112 had begun life as a demonstrator on extended evaluation by CIÉ in Dublin. Most AA buses wore green-based liveries.

ALAN MILLAR



Bottom: One of several subsequent periods of London influence in the buses of the Saltcoats area arose when Stagecoach acquired A1 Service in 1995, and drafted in ex-London Leyland Titans to supplement the buses taken over from A1. GYE 252W was a Leyland-bodied example from Stagecoach East London still carrying adverts for the Adelphi Theatre in this April 1995 view at Saltcoats station, while ex-Tayside Alexander-bodied Volvo Ailsa NSP 334R had been owned by T. & E. Docherty of Irvine. Both vehicles had Stagecoach A1 Service fleetnames applied to their former owners' liveries. Stagecoach has updated the A1 livery for buses on the Ardrossan-Saltcoats-Kilmarnock corridor.

SANDY MACDONALD

Where to send your Irish news reports

Reports on Northern Ireland operators, please, to:
**G. Irvine Millar, 54 Castlemore Avenue,
Belfast, BT6 9RG.**

Reports on Irish Republic operators, please, to:
**Ian Molloy, Willow Grove, Newtownpark Avenue,
Blackrock, Co Dublin,
or by e-mail to: ntpa@eircom.net.**

MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

The continued arrival of new buses once again dominates the month's news. Further new Scania K94/Irizar Intercentury C53F Goldliner Express coaches are 1712-5/8 (EEZ 6712-5/8) at Londonderry (1712/8), Omagh (1713), Larne (1714) and Magherafelt (1715).

Optare Solo SL920 SlimLine/B31F delivered are 1904-6/8-11 (DEZ 8904-6/8-11) are destined for Newry (1904/10), Great Victoria Street (1905), Lisburn (1906/11), Newtownabbey (1908) and Craigavon (1909). Similar 1913 (DEZ 8913), shown on the manufacturer's stand at Coach & Bus Live in October, is the 2,000th Solo built.

New Volvo B7TL/Alexander Dennis ALX400 2994/5/7-9 (EEZ 2994/5/7-9) are allocated to Newtownabbey (2994) and 2995/7-9 (Great Victoria Street); two of the latter are outstationed at Ballygowan and Comber, the first double-deckers based in these Co. Down towns since the days of conductors over 30 years ago.

With completion of track renewal between Belfast and Carrickfergus, many of the buses used for the rail replacement service have returned to their home depots. However, replacement services are still operating between Carrickfergus and Larne, requiring three double-deckers and four single-deckers. New B7TLs 2990-2 have been transferred from Newtownabbey to Larne to operate them, while 2996 has gone to Great Victoria Street. The single-deckers are Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-types 2640/1/3/4 (SXI 2640 etc) transferred, possibly on a permanent basis, to Newtownabbey from Metro.

Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 2809-11 (CCZ 8809-11) have been transferred back from Metro after only a few months there and are at Lisburn, while Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader 648 (DCZ 7648) and Mercedes-Benz 711D/Alexander midibuses 909/19 (JAZ 3909/19) have gone to Flexibus.

Delicensed as a result of the latest deliveries are Dennis Dart/Wright Handbuses 610/2/5 (CAZ 6610/2/5), Mercedes-Benz 709D/Wright TS 889 (AAZ 8889) and

nine-year-old Mercedes 711D/Alexander 895/7-9, 906 (JAZ 3895 etc). Leyland Tiger/Alexander TE-type 516 (PXI 5516) — one of the last Tigers built with a Leyland TL11 engine — has been transferred from Larne to join similar vehicles in the driver training fleet. Also returned to that fleet are short-length Volvo B10M/Caetano Algarve II 512 (JAZ 5512).

DAF MB230/Plaxton Paramount 3500 677 (SXI 1677) has been withdrawn; this 1990 coach was offered to, but rejected by Lough Swilly, which has accepted ex-Shearings Leyland Tiger/Van Hool 596 (RXI 5596, B308 UNB) and Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus 605 (CAZ 6605). Leylands sold for scrap are Leopard/Alexander 159 (UOI 9159) and 277 (YOI 2277) to Beattie, Hillsborough and similar 232 (WOI 2232) and Tiger/Duple 340 533 (OXI 533) to McDade, Londonderry.

Metro

Possibly the largest ever influx of new buses in a single month saw 16 Volvo B7TL/Alexander ALX400 double-deckers enter service as 2875-86/9/90 (EEZ 2875 etc) and 2988/9 (EEZ 2988/9). They are spread around all four depots. Similar 2954/5 (TCZ 9954/5) and 2984-6 (EEZ 2984-6) have returned to their service depots after a spell on railway replacement work.

As reported above, Leyland Tiger/Alexander Q-types 2640/1/3/4 (SXI 2640 etc) and Volvo B10BLE/Wright Renowns 2809-11 (CCZ 8809-11) have been transferred to Ulsterbus.

B7TL 2928 (HCZ 9928), previously in Translink green, has lost its Belfast Citybeat overall advertising livery and is being painted in Metro magenta.

Flexibus

Another Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader here is 648 (DCZ 7648), which has come from Ulsterbus along with Mercedes-Benz 711D/Alexander B25F 909/11 (JAZ 3909/11).

Delicensed are ex-Rose, Broadway Mercedes-Benz 711D/Plaxton Beaver 60 (FAZ 3060, K736 PAB), Mercedes 709D/Wright TS 861 (NXI 6861), Mercedes 811D/Wright TS 'fast front' 1806 (SXI 6806) and Optare MetroRider 1816 (JAZ 1816); 1806/16 were new to Ulsterbus for the Airbus service.

Dublin Bus

The next 100 Alexander Dennis ALX400-bodied Volvo B7TLs (News last month) will be numbered AV449-548 and will most likely enable the withdrawal of the remaining DAF SB220/Alexander Setanta single-deckers AD46-70 and 75 Olympians dating to 1992-94.

Mercedes-Benz Vario minibuses MV70 (98 D 1070) has been withdrawn at Harristown; the remaining six Varios, MV60/2/5/8, 76, 83 (97 D 50060/2, 98 D 1065/8/76/83) are also likely to be withdrawn shortly.

Bus Éireann

Further ex-leased coaches re-acquired for schools duties are understood to include Volvo B10M/Plaxton Premiere VP106/8 (01 D 8052/7). GAC Rural Buses confirmed withdrawn are KS2, 57 (EZV 2, 57), KS136/9 (PZV 136/9), KS199 (XZV 199) and KS211 (87 D 2211).

OTHER OPERATORS

Callinan, Claregalway

This operator is the first in the British Isles to order the all-Volvo 9700 Prestige Plus coach and is taking ten 12.2m models to C49Ft layout.

Lough Swilly

Dennis Dart/Wright Handybus CAZ 6605 and Leyland Tiger/Van Hool coach RXI 5596 (B308 UNB), new to Shearings, have been purchased from Ulsterbus; the Tiger has taken up fleetnumber 482 vacated by Dennis Dart CAZ 6626, which was reported as rejected last month, and the Dart may become 483, but that is not yet confirmed. Another Ulsterbus vehicle rejected was DAF MB230/Plaxton Paramount SXI 1677.

Right: Dublin Bus hosted a bus rally on 30 October to mark the first anniversary of the start of operations at its new Harristown Garage and also to mark the 60th anniversary of the formation of Coras Iompair Éireann, now its parent company. Among the participating vehicles was the immaculately restored CIÉ RA30 (CYI 665), a 1959 Leyland Titan PD3/2 with 74-seat CIÉ body in the 1961 livery of monastrial blue, cream and khaki. It is owned by Fleet News editor Ian Molloy. **DARREN HALL**



FENTON FILE

MIKE FENTON tells the story of six Leyland Tigers given a new lease of life five years ago

Besides its operations in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, the Barnsley-based Traction Group has two subsidiaries in eastern Scotland, the larger of which is Dundee-based

Strathtay Scottish. It acquired the business in June 1991 as part of the Scottish Bus Group privatisation, although Strathtay had only been in existence since 1985 when it was formed out

of parts of the Alexander (Northern) and (Midland) territories. The group has perpetuated Yorkshire Traction's long standing tradition of rebodging and Strathtay has six 12m Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3Rs, the original Duple and Plaxton bodies on which were replaced during 2000 with 49-seat dual purpose East Lancs Millennium bodies.

The Millennium was intended originally for low-floor, rear-engined chassis and first appeared in October 1999 on the DAF SB220s built for London Central's special services to the Millennium Dome at Greenwich. As they have higher floors and underfloor engines, the Tigers are noticeably taller, but in my opinion they are nevertheless striking vehicles.

Illustrating the type is Strathtay 427 (DBZ 918), new in May 1983 as Plaxton Paramount 3500 coach-bodied BAJ 637Y. It re-entered service in its new guise in May 2000 and was photographed in June 2004.



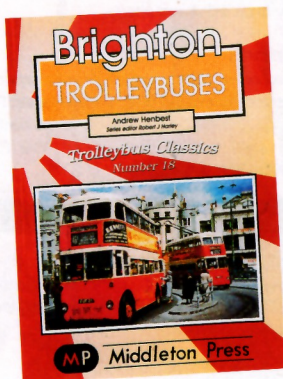


BOOKS

BRIGHTON TROLLEYBUSES

ANDREW HENBEST, MIDDLETON PRESS,
ISBN 1 904474 34 9, 235MM x 165MM,
96pp, SOFTBACK. £14.95

If you want to relive the Brighton trolleybus system in stills picture form, this is the book for you. It has some views that we have all seen before, especially as such historical views are finite, but there is a wealth of super photographic material that is new to these tired old eyes.



Although a relatively small system of but 63 trolleybuses in the ownership of two entities, Brighton Corporation Transport (52) and the Brighton Hove & District Omnibus Company (11) operating under the 1938 Act-mandated title of 'Brighton Hove & District Transport', the author has cleverly split up the town into the various corridors on which the trolleybuses operated, giving a feast of 119 monochrome shots, plus a colour cover.

Old Steine was the centre of the network and most photographs of the system inevitably were taken there. Well, of the 1939-61 fleet, Andrew Henbest has managed to assemble 88 shots taken in other parts of town, many of them absolute stunners. Sure, the book has a somewhat narrow appeal, but if your myopia is Brighton trolleybuses, this is for you.

MICHAEL DRYHURST

SOUTHDOWN DAYS

GLYN KRAEMER-JOHNSON & JOHN BISHOP, IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING, ISBN 0 7110 3077 4, 245MM x 190MM, 96pp, HARDBACK, £16.99

This book is partly the product of a mis-spent youth, as co-author Glyn Kraemer-Johnson confesses that he spent many of his schooldays playing truant, following convoluted Southdown routes to far corners of this once mighty 'empire'.

There is a seemingly insatiable appetite for anything connected with Southdown Motor Services and this volume puts a new slant on the subject by following those marathon rambles and turning it into a survey of locations where Southdown met other operators. The extensive network provided a great variety of famous and some less obvious neighbours. It offers a good account of the 1960s scene, starting with a coastal trip from Brighton into Hampshire and others towards Horsham and Guildford.

Colour reproduction in books is surely at its peak. I found little to fault in any of these images, although some black and whites show more grain than I care for. For me, colour pictures are really what such books are about, aided and abetted by the authors' light narrative.

DAVE SPENCER



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ERE COMES VE BRAHN BUS, DUCK

RICHARD BOURNE & ROGER DAVIES, No ISBN number, 210MM x 150MM, 32pp PAPERBACK £5 (£6 from Richard Bourne, 31 Usher Park Road, Haxby, York, YO32 3RX)

What an odd title. It's supposed to have been used an example of sloppy speech by a Medway schoolteacher, though with certain ties by marriage to the Medway Towns, I who on a good day can tell a Gillingham accent from a Chatham one, am not quite convinced.

Never mind. This October saw the 50th anniversary of the absorption of Chatham & District Traction into its parent company Maidstone & District, 25 years to the day after the company was formed. It's not an especially well-known company, which is perhaps a shame. Chatham and district was a fascinating challenge to bus operation, especially when Chatham was a thriving military town, with hills that must have been a real challenge to drivers of Weymann-bodied Bristol K5Gs and the company had a most distinctive brown, white and green livery.

Those who know Roger Davies's writing will expect this book to be an entertaining read and it is. There's not a huge amount of text, but Richard Bourne has studied the subject thoroughly and I suspect he's done the hard work and Roger's spiced it up. The result is a book that tells enthusiasts most of the things they will want to know but in a way that makes it palatable to anyone with memories of those 'brahn buses' or a taste for the local history of the Medway Towns, an unusual achievement indeed.

It's peppered with little anecdotes and recollections from real people who drove, conducted or just rode on Chatham & District's buses. These add the thing that bus books often overlook, that bus operation is all about people. It also deals sensitively with Chatham & District's greatest and most unfortunate claim to fame, the dreadful day in December 1951 when a bus ran into a group of Royal Marine cadets in the dark and killed 24 of them.

Coincidentally, 'Chatham & District Traction Company 1930-1955 — The Vehicles', a booklet published by the M&D and East Kent Bus Club (price £3.50, or £3.81 from the club at 42 St Alban's Hill, Hemel Hempstead HP3 9NG), gives you a better chance of seeing photographs of Chatham & District buses and reproduces the timetables big enough for you to read.

STEPHEN MORRIS

75 YEARS OF SERVICE IN ESSEX, 1930-2005 WITH EASTERN NATIONAL AND FIRST

GEOFF DODSON, FIRST ESSEX BUSES, ISBN 0 9516361 1 1, 210MM x 145MM, 64PP, SOFTBACK, £7 (post free from First Essex Buses, Chelmsford Travel Centre, Rail Station, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1HT)

This book marks the 75th anniversary of the

start of operations by Eastern National in 1930. It builds on earlier similar works, so the first 40 years are covered in passing in 18 pages, the remainder being devoted to the period from 1970.

It covers vehicle and service developments as well as the company history and provides a useful reference source for the trivia we all tend to forget, such as the appointment of the first woman driver or the phasing out of the last conductor.

Unfortunately, I found it disappointing, coming across as disjointed and with inconsistent degrees of detail. Some photo reproduction is flat and I am surprised that more colour photos could not have been found from the past 30 years. Also, despite having access to company archives, some sections seem questionable or are wrong — such as the reference to a 1946 pooling agreement in Southend. This was proposed, but never came into effect, yet is presented as if it had happened. Even recent events, such as the relationship with Phoenix Student Travel, are not entirely accurate.

That aside, I am sure this will appeal to anyone with an interest in Eastern National and today's First operations in Essex.

RICHARD DELAHOY

VIDEOS

ALL THAT MIGHTY HEART — YESTERDAY'S BRITAIN NO.37

EDITIONS AUDIOVISUEL BEULAH, DVD, 58MIN, BLACK & WHITE AND COLOUR, £14.95 (£16.45 from Beulah, 66 Rochester Way, Crowborough, TN6 2DU, www.eavb.co.uk)

This latest release from Beulah offers three more classic British Transport Films titles on one DVD, all featuring London Transport, but with a difference as one is a previously unreleased title.

The films present all aspects of LT's operations as an integral part of life in London and thus include public transport rather than featuring it exclusively. Hence we are treated to the likes of a suburban housewife shopping in Stevenage New Town by Country Bus RT, an inspector turning short an STL on the busy 101 service after it was delayed by an opening bridge in Docklands.

The three titles comprise *All That Mighty Heart* (1962 — following a day in the life of the capital), *Operating London* — an unreleased film shot in 1952/53 (with no commentary but subtitles to identify locations and some sound effects expertly added) and *Children's Coronation*, looking at the transport of children to the Victoria

Embankment to view the procession. Some of the material for *Operating London* was used in other films, so there is some limited duplication with the main title on the DVD.

Remembering back to school transport society days, when we hired BTF films on



huge reels and grappled with 16mm projectors, to find these titles now available on DVD to view in your own home is fantastic. Tell Father Christmas. **RICHARD DELAHOY**

DRIVERS' EYE VIEW – ROUTE 14 and ROUTE 22

ROUTE 14 PRODUCTIONS

(www.route14productions.co.uk)

DVD, 75MIN PER ROUTE, £14.99 PER ROUTE

If you ever wondered what the view from an RML Routemaster cab looks and sounds like, here's your chance to find out in the amiable company of Putney driver Keith Chaplin.

He has filmed four normal service journeys each way on the two routes and presents them complete and unedited. The most entertaining aspect is Keith's gently amusing and London-wise commentary (spoken live at the time) on everything from historic buildings to where to get a good hot dog (Hyde Park Corner).

There's no camera shake, so the view ahead is highly watchable. One thing you don't ever see is the bus you're on board, nor are there any

kerbside/garage/interior shots as he drives. Drivers will instantly identify with sounds like the clang (or rattle on RML2637) of the gear lever, or the upstairs buzzer. You hear everything from radio messages to rattles.

Filming the 14 westbound on an early winter afternoon was okay until the sun appeared, restricting the view. In 2deg temperatures, so as not to spoil the sound, he doesn't put on the heater/demister until snow starts falling in Putney. Unfortunately, the route 22 sequences are overexposed — not helped by morning and evening peak journeys shot into the low sun.

Little extras surprised me, like a little booster device for my mobile phone's aerial, hearing Flanders & Swann's 'Transport of Delight' and views in the LT Museum.

JOHN G. LIDSTONE

TROLLEYBUSES OF SOUTH LANCASHIRE

TRANSPORT & ST HELENS

ONLINE VIDEO, DVD, 70MIN, £18 (from Geoff Sandford, 46 Lakeside Avenue, Billinge, Wigan, WN5 7BJ)

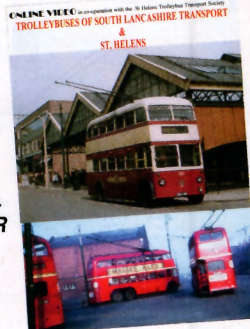
Proceeds from the sale of this DVD will help restore ex-St Helens trolleybus 387, the only

vehicle that survives from the two systems that jointly served this part of Lancashire. It follows the successful Online format, with black and white and colour footage from 1931 to the end of the systems in September 1958, interspersed with stills and maps and voiced over with a well researched commentary.

Among other things, you learn that extra journeys were called 'jiggers', that the 7 and 8 Circulares were always profitable and that SLT sometimes used cables to turn its trolleybuses manually. The films recapture life in once busy mining and mill towns served by buses emblazoned with such advertisements as those for Woodbine cigarettes and Tizer 'pop'.

I wondered for a while why the perfectly accurate dubbed-in sound effects of gently whining trolleybuses seemed wrong, then realised it was because the only sounds are of the vehicles in an otherwise silent world. No voices, no factory hooters, no passing traffic. St Helens, Bolton, Leigh and their environs were noisy places where trolleybuses were the quiet players.

ALAN MILLAR



1/76TH-SCALE MODELS EFE AEC RENOWN

Guide prices £17.75 to £19.99

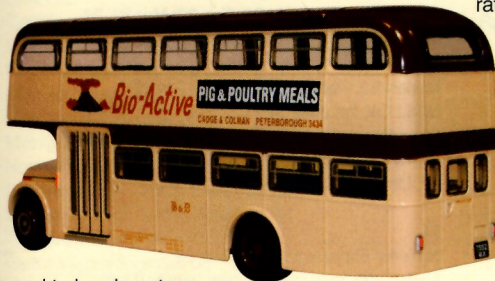
The AEC Renown was the last new halfcab. It was never destined to sell many, so it never entered my head that anyone would produce a diecast of it.

EFE's model captures it well both as North Western 125 and Burwell & District ex-demonstrator 7552 MX. The shape of these sleek 30ft lowheights is spot on. Also well captured is North Western's fixation at the time of doing away with opening windows, and the extra large front dome vent to compensate is painted on.

Two things that jar are seemingly trivial but spoil the overall effect; one is the coarse mesh of the grille — in reality AEC then used a fine mesh — and the dished front wheels. The flat front wheels were an essential part of the Renown's character. My colleague John Lidstone says 7552 MX had an illuminated offside advertisement panel, and this is only represented by a heavy, curved black line around its advert.

It's also apparent that having set the standard for the new generation of diecasts, EFE is falling behind. The attention to detail from Hong Kong manufacturers means you get almost perfect replicas from them, and in comparison EFE's painted-on destination screens and 'generic' interiors

rather than ones tailored to the individual vehicle seem a bit cheapskate. In fairness, that is reflected in the price, and black-edged windows give a good impression of rubber, which



used to be absent on

EFEs. Also the Hong Kong models are generally of vehicles that still exist and can be measured up to enable such detail; as far as I know, sadly no North Western Renown still exists.

And is it fair to carp at such trivial things when I now possess a pretty fair diecast representation of my all-time favourite bus, hardly a mainstream vehicle at that, at a price that didn't break my bank? I don't think so.

STEPHEN MORRIS



CREATIVE MASTER NORTHCORD MERCEDES-BENZ CITARO

Guide prices £19.99 (rigid), £23.49 (artic)

This casting of a contemporary bus has been longer in the making than the manufacturer intended, as the winners of our competition in

February *Buses* will realise. Their prizes have only just been mailed out. Thanks, guys, for your patience. The wait, however, is worthwhile and — to repeat an old cliché — you wait months for a Citaro diecast and within a month you receive four.

We have now seen samples of the 12m two-door rigid in First London Riverside (route RV1) and green Oxford Park-&-Ride liveries, as well as two London artics — the white two-door demonstrator on the 436 and a three-door Stagecoach on the 25.

They are everything we've come to expect of a quality Hong Kong model, capturing the Citaro in fine detail with seats and handpoles in the operators' own colours, with all the proper little notices and symbols on the sides. There don't appear to be the compromises that mass production often demands, as the panel joins are where they ought to be on the two and three-door artics, which also come in boxes with see-through ends so you need never unpack them.

ALAN MILLAR



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Yellow Buses goes on sale
Metroline buys Armchair
Edinburgh Fastlink guided busway opens
Dunn-Line to float on AIM
MASS closes Reliance, Grantham
Stagecoach buys Ayrways buses
Sydney Albion reaches UK (P)

FEBRUARY

2 Travel cuts back and loses O-licence
First and Translink announce orders
Alexander Dennis reveals Enviro400 picture
Stagecoach selects Siemens optical guidance
New-style Irizar Century coach
End for Taylor, Sutton Scotney
2004 bus and coach registrations
Singapore orders 150 Volvo B9TLs
Routemaster raffle (P)

MARCH

Black Prince to sell to First
Wallace Arnold/Shearings to merge
Flood wrecks Stagecoach Carlisle fleet
Enviro400 front revealed
Alexander Dennis closes Wigan plant
Arriva to buy German bus company (G)
NatEx Australian company in administration (G)
Orders for Santiago, Mumbai (G)
Craven RT1431 runs again (L)
Stagecoach Neoplan Skyliners (S)

APRIL

Edinburgh voters reject congestion charge
First StreetCar on streets of York
Arriva offers to invest in Merseyside
Hylton & Dawson gives up bus route
Dunn-Line bids for MASS Lincoln
TGM sells Dartford to Metrobus
Trent Barton gets first Optare Tempus
Universitybus rebrands as Uno
London Central orders Wright Electrocities
Enviro500s in America (G)
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Enviro200 on trial with London United (L)
NCP wins London contracts (L)

MAY

Glenvale for sale
Stagecoach orders 342 buses, buys Dennis's, Dukinfield
Lothian orders Wright, Volvo and Scania
First orders OmniDekkas and Tridents
Plaxton develops wheelchair accessible coach
Shearings/Wallace Arnold merger completed
Bidding closes for Yellow Buses
Tata buys stake in Hispano (G)
Auwärter in receivership (G)
Rome orders 400 gas buses (G)
Travel London gains route 188 (L)
West London trolleybus plan (L)
Rapson buys Causeway (S)

JUNE

Southern Vectis in takeover talks
Go-Ahead bids for Yellow Buses
Volvo launches 9700 Prestige Plus coach
MAN seeks new UK body partners
Stagecoach orders more new buses
Keighley & District gets 'stretch limos'
Dunn-Line buys MASS Lincoln
D&G takes over Choice Travel
First sparks Irish price war
Rome trolleybuses start running (G)
Wellington agrees funding for trolleybuses (G)

JULY

Go-Ahead to buy Southern Vectis and Lewes
TGM sells London buses to National Express
2 Travel wound up
Green Bus, Darlington closes down
First 15m coach for UK
Alexander Dennis unveils Enviro400
Plaxton announces Centro bus
VDL launches Bova Lexio (G)
NABI closes Compobus factory (G)

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First begins to take over Black Prince
Alexander Dennis to build simpler Enviro200
Revamp for Heathrow coach station
Tsunami relief buses shipped from UK
Stagecoach annual results
Volvo to close German coach plant (G)
Berlin orders 300 MAN double-decks (G)
Austrian Postbus privatises 150 routes (G)

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July bus bombings in London
Stagecoach buys Glenvale
Arriva buys Blue Bus
First completes Black Prince takeover
New South Yorkshire Motors starts
Management buys back Optare
National Express announces accessible coach
Transdev set to buy Yellow Buses
New livery for Plymouth Citybus
NatEx sells US transit buses (G)
Arriva buys Italian company (G)
Hamburg buys Van Hool double-artics (G)
Royal Blue anniversary (P)

OCTOBER

Blackburn stake put up for sale
Yellow Buses sale delayed
Major changes in Southampton
Blazefield relaunches X43
Brian Souter explains Glenvale deal
First launches accessible Profiles
Supreme, Hadleigh closes
NatEx sells Sydney buses to ComfortDelGro (G)
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CT Plus to run West Yorkshire schoolbuses
Stagecoach buys 35% of Scottish Citylink
Go-Ahead completes Lewes takeover
TGM buys Supreme, Colchester
National Express reveals Caetano Levante
Coach & Bus Live
Irisbus plans new range for UK
National Express plans to buy Alsa (G)
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Huddersfield to be franchise testbed?
£20 million for Kick-Start routes
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BUSES CLASSIFIEDS

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25 November 2005, on sale 16 December 2005

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EVENTS

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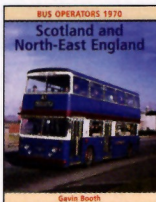
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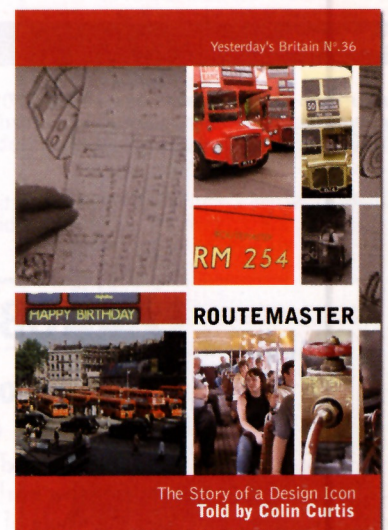
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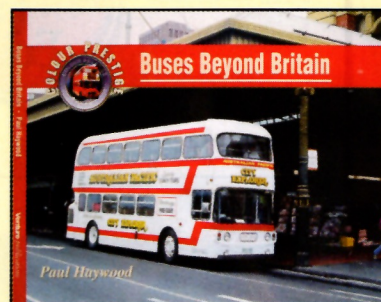
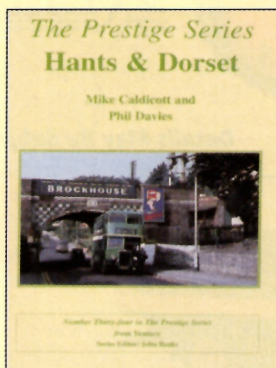
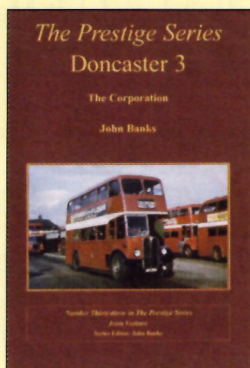
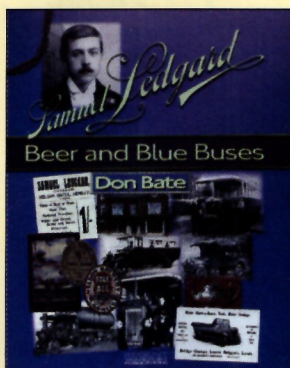
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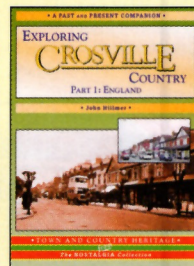
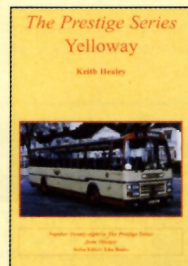
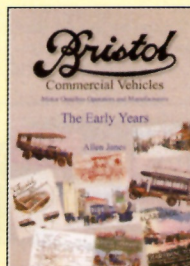
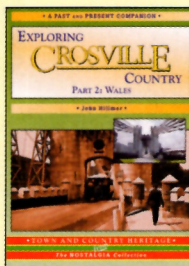
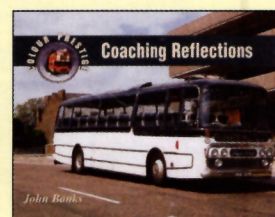
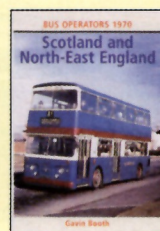
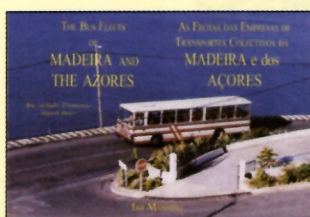
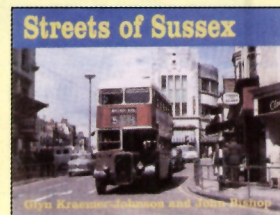


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